977.277
STA

ECKHART PUBLIC LIBRARY
603 S. Jackson St.
Auburn, IN 46706

SON OF...

REFLECTIONS

Hubert L. Stackhouse

© 1996 Hubert L. Stackhouse
First American Edition

Design and Composition By:
Reflections Press
4306 Sherman Blvd.
Fort Wayne, IN 46808

Printed By:
Butler Printing Co.
100 N. Broadway
Butler, IN 46721

977.2
STA
(IND. COLL)

ECKHART PUBLIC LIBRARY
603 S. Jackson
Auburn, IN 46706

4/01

A DEDICATION

(Once in a while, you sort of have "to sneak dawn past the rooster". Hence, this Dedication cannot be printed in the same typeface as the remainder of the book. Sorry 'bout that!)

o o o

The Usual "Pre-Good Stuff" Stuff

In re: **Forewords**...like in golf, "Get out of the Way, Stupid?

In re: **Introductions**...like, "This is my daughter. She's homlier than a mud fence, but we need to get her married off!"?

In re: **Prefaces**...like, in the morning, that's what you see in the mirror before take your make-up kit and "restore the ruins"?

In re: **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS!!:** (This I know!) It's when you "Thank" La Belle Waander again...**again...and AGAIN** for sustaining your operation.

It's when you "Thank" **Craig Taylor** for the original Great Idea (of writing a series of articles).

It's when you "Thank" your **Patient, Supportive Audience** who keep buying the books.

And, it's when you "Thank" **Janet Hamilton;** and then **doubly, triply, BARRY BARTELS** for the many hours spent, hunched over a keyboard, trying to discipline these scattered ramblings! If this work has a visual grace...**it's Barry who "dunnit".**

(And just be glad I didn't get around to a Glossary, Index, or Appendix! ['ja wanna' see my scar, a la L.B.J?])

12-2-96

Table of Contents

ALL I SAID WAS...	1
THE LADY (?) AND THE BILLINGSGATE	4
THE FOODS OF MY CHILDHOOD	6
WHY I WRITE FUNNY	11
IN WHICH I PUT MY MONEY WHERE MY MOUTH IS	15
SHADES OF THE LONERGAN JUNK YARD	18
COUSIN BEA AND THE IMMACULATE CONTRAPTION	21
ON EMULATING J. P. MARQUAND	24
MY LIFE AMONG THE ELITE (OR WHATEVER!)	28
ON THE LAND –1910	31
REFLECTIONS ON A LADY DOCTOR	42
WITH A LITTLE BIT OF HELP FROM MY FRIENDS	45
AND JUST A LITTLE OFF THE TOP	50
JONES-Y REVISITED	54
"COWED" BY IT ALL	56
"SEVENTEENTH SUMMER" TIMES FOUR	59
HANK AND THE REMARKABLE SALVE	65
ON BEING A THOUROUGHLY ROTTEN CADDIE	69
A MOMENT OF MARTHA	73
FURTHER ASPECTS OF RESTAURANTEURING	76
ON COLORFUL RELATIVES	87
CHRISTMAS AS I KNEW IT	91
TAKING MAMA TO DINNER	96
SO...HUMOR ME PLEASE	102
HUMOR ME--PART TWO	110
AN OLD CODGER REVISITED	114
A BIRTHDAY HAPPENING	117
L'INTERLUDE POETIQUE	120
A HOOSIER LOOKS AT HICKSVILLE	122
LAYERS AND LAYERS OF NONSENSE	126
MY HOUSE BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD	129

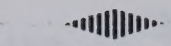


Table of Contents (cont)

MAMA'S ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT	133
HOW DO I LOVE/LOATHE THEE?	138
THE WHISTLING WIRES	142
VARIATIONS ON A MEDICAL THEME	146
PHILOSOPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS WHILE PUNISHING A WAYWARD LAWN	149
I'LL BET YOU DON'T REMEMBER ME	151

ALL I SAID WAS...

This business of being an "expert" is odd, to say the most (I never say anything the "least", you may have noted!) All I said was....(Talking to Le Grande Journalistic Poo-bah of the Hicksville Tribune)....."**Hain't God bin' good to Indianny!**" (certainly not very original). in re: the way our waterways flow in this area. For ....

Consider N.E. Indiana's penchant for "imported" disasters, flood-style. First, we have.....Fish Creek, "outletting" Hamilton lake and recently in flood, flowing over into Ohio to join the **south-western flowing** St. Joe of the Maumee (as distinguished from St. Joseph of the Lake, flowing north-westerly, sorta, through Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties and emptying into Lake Michigan [Guess why they named South Bend "South Bend!"] Well, then, the romantic old St. Joe flows as though headed for a respectable end in the Wabash River system of Indiana...passing through such eminence's as Newville (where my father nearly drowned in it, c. 1912, while working on a new bridge); Orange, scene of the Kinkaid Mill and the celebrated "dog-rescues-drowning-tot" vignette; on to St. Joe, where my mother

...."expert". Oh, no! I'd guess I'm rather more a literary and geographical name-dropper!

and her father fished, c. 1905, in a CLEAN river; further on to Spencerville, one of the first settlements in the county; then through Leo and on - on - on to the Three Rivers Filtration Plant in Ft. Wayne. But, at Ft. Wayne, it commits a watery heresy; and, after joining with the **north-westerly flowing** St. Mary's River to become the Mighty Maumee, **makes a nearly 180 degree reversal and FLOWS TOWARD LAKE ERIE! ,** to eventually empty

into the Atlantic Ocean, via the St. Lawrence River system.

Well, that was a bit useful in our pre-settlement days when a relatively brief portage allowed you to go from the St. Lawrence system to the Wabash-Ohio-Mississippi system. The French...the fur traders, courier de bois, voyageurs, et al, did use it so and coveted it in the 18th century.

And, the waterways dictated the early

development of the area. When Houlton entered upon the territory, he came up the St. Joe and Fish Creek to the general area of Hamilton to found the first "settlement". When Spencerville and Orange and Auburn were founded, all were placed on "working water" locations suitable to water-powered mills. At Orange and Spencerville, banks were high enough to allow dams and mill races that kept the danger of floods to a minimum...**but they must have had 'em from time to time..(but there were forests a-plenty and prairies to slow-down and "meter-off" heavy rain-falls).**

Auburn was a sad, expensive exception...eventually. Wesley Park could have found ground almost 15' higher, **one-half mile in any direction,** according to the late Mayor Jerry Oren. But, Wesley elected the working water, set the town in a swampy swale, and "bought" big dollar drainage problems for the town. The Mayor was quite pointed (!) in rejecting my proposal, made many years ago, to erect a statue to our town founder... and just for that reason.

Well, anyhow....so the St. Joe brings us water from Michigan and Ohio, and St. Mary's brings up water from Ohio, and they **do contribute** to flooding conditions in Ft. Wayne every spring or so. Oh, 'tis true...lots of the water comes from drainage in Indiana's NE

corner; but none the less, much of those floods are run out-of-state.

Well.....when the fine young reporter from the Hicksville Tribune came knocking on my phone (and then my door), I **properly acknowledged** that I'm NOT, repeat, NOT an expert on waterways...just an observer. I rambled onward about the "gift of the glaciers", leaving us the beds of sand and gravel, that so aided early "infrastructuring" of the area. I rambled onward about early canal efforts in the general area...about such vignettes in Richter's celebrated "Trees-Fields-Town" Trilogy, about Adams' Erie Canal-set works, and the Gronauer Lock problem of New Haven and Allen County.

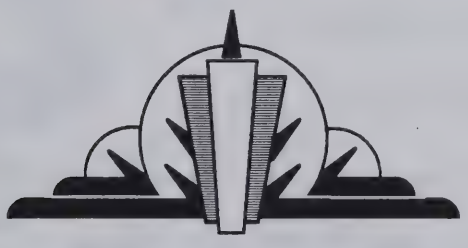
And then the reporter toyed with calling me an "expert". Oh, no! I'd guess I'm rather more a literary and geographical name-dropper! So there!

Future name dropping?

1. Clamming on the St. Joe River

2. Thar' She Flows!, (on Dredging Cedar Creek--already in print)

3. A Quaint, Ecumenical Vignette of the Flood of '83



THE LADY(?) AND THE BILLINGSGATE

There are those moments of exasperation in life when words...at least those of polite society...fail you; and you are driven to short, Anglo-Saxon, guttural, abundantly profane expressions. I suppose we shouldn't do so, but if you are driving a rusted, "superannuated" van, and if the sucker won't start for you in the Scott's parking lot...then the pressure may be just too great to endure. And so it was!

The van was as described above, but with the added factor that the driver had parked it in a space for the handicapped. Well, let me tell you, Buster.....whatever the handicap was, it did not affect the agility of the driver, who ricocheted from the driver's seat to the "under-the-hood" area with truly enviable speed...AND REPEATEDLY! **And the handicap did not extend to the driver's**

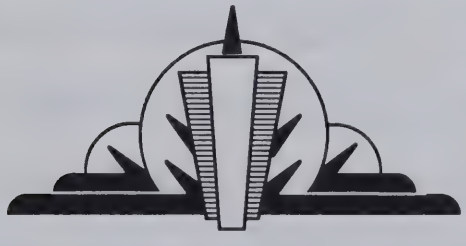
"profanity gland...<u>SHE</u> could express herself with a forceful (about "force 10", in hurricane terms) if limited vocabulary. During the two or three minutes that it took me to unload

my shopping cart into my trunk, she used at least four dramatic, sometimes sexually explicit insults to the situation and the balky motor...expressions that I'd blush to use (Yes, that I **HAVE used and blushed at...BUT IN PRIVATE).** She knew I was there; she certainly did not give any indication that this was an inhibiting factor. Verbally, BOMBS AWAY! ! !

. . . the pressure may just be too great to endure. And so it was!

The motor ignored her, and when I left the parking lot, it was still refusing to start. I am sure that motor had the better of not only the driver, but the rest of us: WE could hardly ignore her!

Another day I must go back and see if the van is gone.....and are there any scorch marks on the pavement?



THE FOODS OF MY CHILDHOOD

November, 1995. While awaiting the publication of my most recent work, "A Fatuous Cookbook" ("Fat-to-Us"?), I came across the notes made for another article, one that logically should have been included in that collection of recipes and opinions. It was a walk down memory lane (really, through Memory's Pantry), reviewing foods as I remembered them from 60 years ago....and with the help of friends, further back than that.

Where to begin? Some location that dramatizes the great strength of that age: **almost no prepared foods.** When you went into Mike Lumm's Grocery (on Jackson Street, just south of the present Post Office, you went for ingredients, not box mixes. True, there would be lovely deep boxes (about 14" X 14" x 14"), filled with "store-bought" crackers, or sugar wafers, or sandwich cookies).. Of course, you can still get these, but now they are packaged in disciplined dozens and cellophane, and they can never have quite the aroma or freshness of a newly opened box in Mike's. If one of the clerks (I do remember Marion Peckhart working there in the early

> In season, you had your home-grown veggies that differed radically from those of today, inasmuch as **they had FLAVOR!**

30's) bagged them for you, I do NOT remember any dainty plastic gloves to satisfy the demands of the Board of Health. Marion was a neat man; and after all, you could trust your stomach to deal with an occasional bacterium, anyhow.

On the end of the counter, a wire basket with fresh country eggs, to be "brown-bagged" and carried home with delicacy. On that same counter, a round of County Line cheese, tasting like it never can again. With it, a huge, machete-type knife and **A FREE SAMPLE** to help you make up your mind! Sometimes, in some stores, a glass dome over the cheese...especially in fly-time. (And many stores had gooey adhesive fly strips hung discretely to cut down the buzzing pests.)

Yes, a few things were boxed, but interestingly, they were kept on tall shelves BEHIND the counters. The clerks would use an elongated "gripper" to pull them from the shelves as demanded, often catching them in one hand while working the device with the other.

On the ends of the counters, sometimes barrels containing flour, sugar, staples...to be ladled into brown 1#, 2# and 5# bags as the customer requested (flour, sometimes in 25 or 50 pound weights, and in a very heavy paper or cloth bag). The latter was for several generations the basis of everyday, home-made clothing.

The prudent householder went shopping with an iron-clad list, not susceptible to impulse shopping so slyly built into the design and display of current supermarkets. But.....there would usually be room for a small bag of chocolate drops or horehound candies (and indeed the latter made a very effective cough drop, now didn't it?).

To a selected clientele, Mike or Hebel's or other established grocers would and did extend credit, to be settled on Saturday (payday) night.

"WAIT! WAIT! WAIT! Where are the green groceries...the leafy green-and-yellow veggies we so desperately need...our daily fix of beta-carotene and all?" **Well, backward boy, you had a garden, now didn't you?** In season, you had your home-grown veggies that differed radically from those of today, inasmuch as **they had FLAVOR!** True, no celery for 11 months a year...short seasons at best of strawberries, raspberries, peaches. True, no South American grapes "out-of-season". (Indeed, given an open purse, there is no longer any such concept as "out-of-season", just "out of money"!)

The veggies that did carry us through the winters were not flown in from Jamaica or Chile or Chihuahua. They were in the basement in glass jars, put there by mother in the season of plenty. They were in a storage bin in the basement, holding potatoes, onions, the marvelous-but-grotesque Hubbard squash and its cousins...and the apples. California produce hadn't yet been lured onto the market by fast freights and uncounted millions of Eastern dollars paying for a mindless waste of Western water. Oh, maybe a few Sunkist navels at Christmas time; maybe a few Arizona lemons now and then....but despite the dearth of these, we somehow survived. Y'know? You

can make a vinegar pie that rivals a lemon pie!

In addition to the splendid service given by Mike's (and they did deliver orders!), there were a surprising number of "Mom-'n-Pop" operated corner groceries....Marvin Shaw's at 20th and VanBuren....Hamman's at 9th and Indiana....Palmer's "Little Dutch" on North Street....and three times that many not

mentioned. Small enterprise flourished; a cold newsboy could drop in on a bitter Sunday morning to get warmed up, and Tony Lemish drove to Toledo in very early morning to get special produce for HIS customers. And....you knew the proprietor by name and by service.

And, in the early 30's....store-bought bread? Not yet, I think. You went to Baker's Bakery for the like. Cabbage and potatoes and onions....you COULD drive into the country to Troyers or others to buy in bulk. Apples? Leichty's and Widney's in St. Joe were a pleasant drive away.

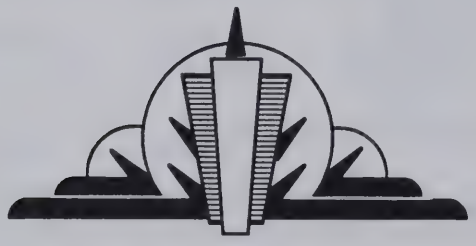
I'm not the scholar to know when the larger, and LARGER, super-market at last arrived on the scene. Such significant social movements are almost always missed by we "ivory-tower" types. I'm glad I missed the moment....something special was lost, and we shall not ever regain it, I am sorry to say.

And then, just when you think you've had an effective-if-not-"last word", you mention your article to a dear, very-mature cousin, and she adds some priceless reminiscences of her youth: the other store in downtown Auburn with the be-wigged proprietor who sneezed one day and flipped his toupee into a barrel of sugar to the vast amusement of onlooking children and thereafter, everyone they could relate the event to! The standard oiled-wood floors, cleanly swept several times a day, that would so inflame a modern fire inspector!

The stores were, of a fact, a place of charm to children. The bouquet of smells that greeted you....the spices, the pickles, the cookies and crackers and cheese and the stick candies and...and...and. **And,** the kindly (and commercially astute) proprietor could be counted on for a free hand-out of a hard candy, a horehound "kiss", a bonafide jawbreaker!

And have I spoken of the ambiance? More than just the enchanting odors, more than the oiled floors, more than the bulk staples...the lighting and the ventilation were part of it. Of,

to be sure, some sort of heating for chilly months, perhaps the classic "pot-bellied" stove in the middle or rear of the store. In summer, perhaps the milling ceiling fans, not really cooling the air at all but giving the effect by keeping the air slowly turning. and the lighting? Not the cold neon, the cold fluorescent...no, let it be warm, dim (relatively) incandescents or even further back, kerosene lamps...or...even gaslight? Surprisingly, although they did not emulate our modern 24-hour-a-day markets, they did keep other-than-modern-business hours...earlier in the morning, later at night, and Saturdays 'till 9:00 or 10:00 PM. But, **no Sundays!** Blue laws did prevail, if not on the books, then in the heart.



WHY I WRITE FUNNY

As I lay in bed, preparing for this "talk" (Yes, dear friends, two things I must assert: that I do prepare somewhat for these occasions, and: that I do some of my best planning while lying in bed. So there, the secrets are out!).... well, as I lay there planning, the idea struck me that perhaps you'd be interested in knowing how I got to be the way that I am.

I digress: Consider the economy of the above: If no inspiration comes to me in the supine position, I can easily drift into a nap...a reward for the elderly in itself.

Well, anyhow....I do write..handwriting-wise, "funny", and it's no accident! Ages and ages ago, when I was young, a consortium of JayCees used to host a New Year's Eve party: Harold "Hank" Carper, Don Albert Rice, Marion Webb, and I...some of us aided and abetted by wives.

. . .There's enough going on in this world that is at once grim. To a lot that life offers, you can either "lump it" and laugh, or weepingly sink under it all.

We were longer on energy and wit than on money, and we sort of extemporized on arrangements. I contributed meagerly of the money and somewhat more generously of the

wit. I did the invitations....some in rather questionable taste. Once, an invitation printed on bathroom tissue, in a rather suggestive color of ink. Once, each invitation was cut into irregular pieces before being mailed, requiring you to assemble your own. And, once, I reasoned correctly that I could learn the peculiar style of Jeffersonian handwriting used in the Declaration of Independence. So, I more-or-less mastered it, wrote a master copy for Marion's printer to "burn into a plate" and print on brown butcher paper, saturated each invitation in paraffin, ironed ach with a hot iron, rolled and charred the edges of each, and mailed 'em. It looked pretty much like an ancient document, frayed around the edges by age. Our guests deciphered it and came in hungry and thirsty droves. And, I remembered the technique.

So.....when the public showed a flattering taste for my writings, to the extent that I was asked to sign them...personalize them...and since my sister-in-law had given me a calligraphic pen set for a Christmas present, I put it all together and began throwing some pretty wild signatures.

An added bonus: sometimes I take notes on public presentations of other speakers. If the speaker is a "low-bridge"...in some fashion offends my taste, to the point that I wish to remember it...I write my notes in Thomas Jefferson's handwriting, and am thereby free of the embarrassment that could occur if someone read my less-than-flattering commentary. If the speaker is **TERRIBLE,** I will farther write the notes in Spanish and Jefferson, **and even I can't read that!**

But, "Why do I write funny funny: in the humorous vein/vane/vain?" Well, dear friends:

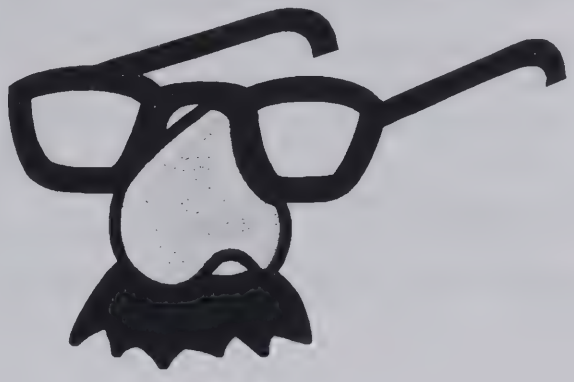
There's enough going on in this world that is at once grim. To a lot that life

offers, you can either "lump it" and laugh, or weepingly sink under it all.

You can sometimes make your point with humor where serious discourse would lose your audience at once. Sort of Mary Poppin-esque, "A Spoonful of Sugar Makes the Political Poll Go Down."

There's a definite audience for the fluff of life, more so than for the stuff of life!. I am pleased to tell you that there are more than two dozen groups that I have had the pleasure of performing for, AND I ENJOY IT. Why else do you suppose I have my fees where they are? **And, to be sure, it helps the stuff sell.** (Rotary-2; Friends of Library; Heimach Center-2; Out-of-town Lions Ladies programs-2; Ft. Wayne Jewish Federation; DeKalb Historical Society; Noble County Women's Democrats; Entre Nous and Auburn Author's Day-2).

There's an inexhaustible supply of material: When I got to enjoying writing...and the recognition it brings...I assumed that there was no end of the historical material to be mined. But, after nearly 90 articles, I can see that I'm in danger of working over the

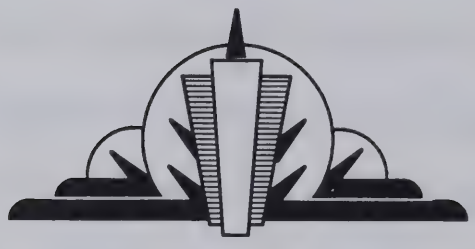


old "mine trailings". But, to paraphrase Sir Christopher Wren's epitaph, "Si monumentum requiris, circumspice"..to wit, "If you seek (his) monument, look around you." Well, friends, if you look at our world for ten minutes, something ridiculous is going to happen. Given the modern world of politics...the world of entertainment...both worlds where they take themselves far to seriously...they'll be doing something preposterous just any minute now. To wit: a comic strip commentary on the withdrawal of candidates from the

primaries, due to lack of funds: "If they can't spend money when they don't have it, they don't belong in Washington anyhow!..and..."That man is trying to buy the nomination with his own money, whereas we're trying to buy it with yours!"...a sort of "flip of the bird" to fedeal election funds.

Inexhaustible...like the classic fable of the mill that ground salt endlessly, making the oceans to become salty. "The mills of the (political) gods grind slowly, but exceedingly funny."

So...don't slam the lid of my coffin too quickly. I may not be done writing, even then.



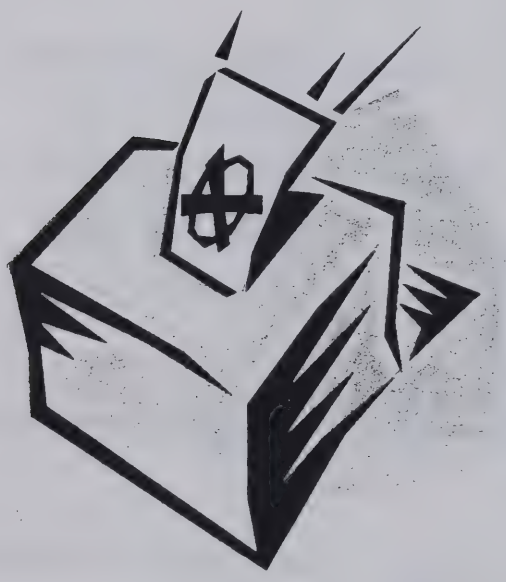
IN WHICH I PUT MY MONEY WHERE MY MOUTH IS!!!

The most impressive political speech (?) I ever heard was delivered, oddly, by a very young man...a Secretary of State of Oklahoma, who was all of 29 years old at the time. Oklahoma had just tried a radical experiment...it had elected officials who were intent on doing just what they had promised. They were, as it were, true political radicals; for they had said that they would truly dry Oklahoma up unless the state abolished its hypocritical prohibition stance. Sounds odd? Well, it was then said that Oklahoma would vote "dry" as long as it could stagger to the polls, and accordingly, bootlegging flourished. Came the youth movement, and the State Police were ordered to ENFORCE the law.

Given the notoriety this action engendered, it was little wonder that members of "Boys' State", as they whimsically identified themselves, were much in demand as speakers. Said Secretary of State was booked to appear at an Indiana JayCees Governmental Affairs School, held in the Severin Hotel in Indianapolis sometime in the late '50's. Well, now, the speaker was truly a sensation. He

> . . . corrupt politics...proceed exactly from a voting populace...or perhaps more likely from a populace that doesn't vote

played a massive joke on his audience by appearing to forget punch lines from three consecutive jokes, later to remember them with tremendous effect. His audience vastly enjoyed being "suckered in" by his ruse. His effect was probably enhanced by the presence on each table of two bottles of complimentary wine...(not Oklahoma wine, I should think.)



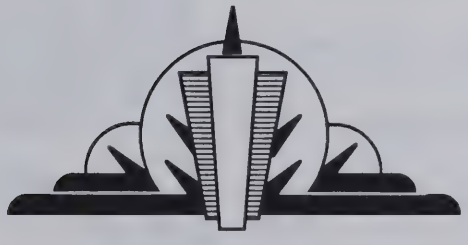
He also included a dazzling, if improbably joke, about an Oklahoma Quaker (?), an ill-natured cow, and some Methodists.

And then, he reminded us...with tremendous effect...of the basic truth of political life...the basic truth that we so easily forget; to wit: **YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR IN POLITICS ! ! !** He brought the truth home again and again that corrupt politics...if that is your belief...proceed exactly from a voting populace...or perhaps more likely from a populace that doesn't vote...a populace that did **not** encourage good candidates to seek office, did **not** support good men when they did seek office...and probable **never** got directly into the fray themselves. They stood back, lamented the lack of talent and honesty in politics, and whined about corruption. **"If this is your situation, THEN IT IS YOU YOURSELF WHO IS CORRUPT!"** "You have gotten what you have paid for, deservedly!"

Well, now...we were a group of community activists, and much disposed to accept his message. We would go home, and hopefully apply what we had heard. I did go home, and to a modest degree, I tried. I accepted an

occasionally supportive role with a political party steadily drifting and polarizing. I found less and less comfort in a traditional political polarity, and I vigorously began voting for the candidate, rather than his party. I didn't make party loyalists feel much happier, and at last, I abandoned/was abandoned by party politics. But, I DO support a good candidate now and then...writing for at least three of them, stuffing envelopes, making posters and charts, and **giving money** now and then.

I suppose it would make a sizzling wind-up to this piece to cite some otherwise corruptible individual that I had personally prevented from taking office...or some good man who might have never developed his political gifts at all, were it not for me. Nothing so dramatic, I'm sad to say. But, **...BUT,** I've tried to honor that young man's admonition. I give of my time, my talent, and my money, and **I NEVER FAIL TO VOTE MY CONVICTIONS,** that my politicians will have fewer convictions on their records, also.



SHADES OF THE LONERGAN JUNK YARD

The richest portion of my childhood was spent in the Depression, and it didn't hurt at all! (For after all...what every child wants is to be like the "Joneses", and they were poor too!) It was not an age of commonly-granted allowances for kids; when you absolutely NEEDED some money, there were a few ways to get it. It was the age of the returnable milk and/or pop bottle (usually for 2 cents each), and Lonergan's Junk Yard. Not "salvage"; not "re-cycling", thank you; just JUNK! (Oh, to be sure, there were other junk yards in operation [but as far away as Auburn Junction], but our focus of operation was on Van Buren Street between 2nd and 3rd Streets--later the G. M. Reno residence, and subsequently, the Nazarene Parsonage.

And what did we collect, haul laboriously, and sell to Mr. Lonergan? We collected old newspapers, simply (?). Well, not so simply, since a much smaller percentage of homes subscribed to the Star/Courier/Dispatch and/or the Journal/Sentinel. So....you scrounged up papers wherever you

could....politely inquired of the neighbor's papers....and slowly accumulated the necessary poundage. The junkyard minimally...and I MEAN minimally...paid for your papers tied in some sort of bundle and delivered to the yard by your own or a borrowed coaster wagon. Never can I recall getting more than a dime for all we had accumulated at one moment...but,

It was the age of the returnable milk and/or pop bottle ... and Lonergan's Junk Yard

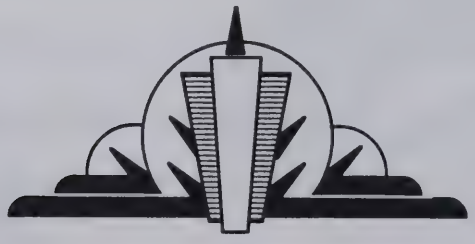
you could do a lot with a dime then. The papers were weighed, and then thrown onto a nondescript pile of no rhyme or reason. Eventually, they would be put in the massive baling machine and compacted into huge bundles, to then disappear from our sight forever. Rags were also collected and sold, and I think all must have one day reappeared in re-cycled paper products. Scrp metals were a less likely collection for us, but more rewarding...if you found any at all. The alleys and trash heaps were our theater of operations; and the resulting collection was also surrendered to Lonergan, but for better returns than papers. It would be cast into appropriate piles in the yard, to later be collected in trucks and shipped away...most of it. Most of it, that is, BUT NOT ALL!

When my sister and brother-in-law built on the Lonergan lots in the late '40's, they banked their foundation in excavated earth. More earth was hauled in, including some good fill dirt, to grade the lot. Somewhat later, my brother-in-law decided to have a garden close to the alley behind the house. One would have assumed there to be enough fill dirt and "native" top dirt under that to make a garden. But, when one had the land plowed, the share went through the

"cosmetic" layers and unearthed a treasure-trove of rusty iron, the legacy of the junkyard. No one will ever do any excavation in the back yard of that property without receiving plenteous reminders of its past.

That resultant garden grew well enough; plantings of fruit trees survived to fruition, although we always sort of wondered if their quirkiness was the result of the iron-rich soil, or that my brother-in-law (a consummate "deal maker" on the road) had been bamboozled by some nurseryman. A "Red Delicious" tree might bear "Grimes Goldens", and an "Italian Prune Plum" might bear "Damson Plums"!

On the south edge of the lot (the former "front" entrance of the lot), there was no mistaking the product, unfortunately. They were talked into planting thorny locust trees, a nauseous choice for a residence with children. The locusts prospered; their thorns were of Olympic proportion. Those were trees to conjure with! I close by wondering what the course of the human race would have been if the apple in the Garden of Eden had grown on a thorny locust. At least the snake would have gotten what was coming to him!



COUSIN BEA AND THE IMMACULATE CONTRAPTION

My mother was a very young "youngest child", being 18, 16, and 9 years the junior of her siblings. When she had play friends of her own age, they were the likes of Niece Irene (daughter of the 18-year older brother), and Cousin Bea of Hicksville (a bit her junior, but forceful enough to hold her own in any relationship!)

As they grew up, married, founded families of their own...they remained as close as sisters might have. (Oh, mother DID get along warily with her two older sisters, but they were divided by distance, age, and religion...cordial, but not chummy!) Bea, on the other hand, was someone you could love fiercely, quirks, "warts and bumps", and all!

Among other accomplishments of mother that Bea admired and honored, was that of being a good cook. Not that Bea herself wasn't a good cook; she certainly was, but we all like a meal away from home now and then. Very much appreciated was mother's pie-baking skills, and mother often took a pie with her when she visited Bea there on Edgerton Street in Hicksville.

> . . . the unfortunate woman who equates an immaculate house with a good marriage and subsequently "cleans her husband right out of her life!"

BUT...but...on bristly Cousin Bea's conditions!

Cousin Bea had a fetish about cleanliness. Had she not had other winning qualities, she might literally have been like "Craig's Wife" in the play, the unfortunate woman who equates an immaculate house with a good marriage and subsequently "cleans her husband right out of her life!" There was lots of bric-a-brac in Bea's home...too much furniture...too many painfully starched little doilies under just everything (it seemed)...**and all immaculately kept, dusted, cleaned...** for as long as Bea could do her own work. Fortunately, Cousin Bea's husband, Seth ("Si"), was a precise worker (tools and dies), and could endure the "Murphy's-Oil-Soap Ambiance".

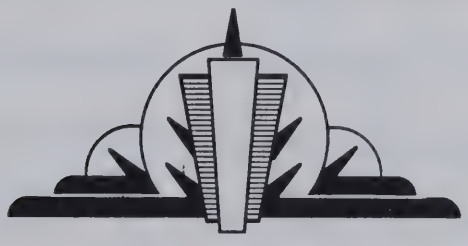
So, we would go a'visitin' Si and Bea, taking our **pre-baked** pie with us. Now, it WOULD have been more convenient to make it there, or to take an un-baked pie with us and bake it in her oven. But, mother's formula for good fruit-filled pie called for one-hour in the oven, and **the pie must stew (almost invariably bubble up through the crust AND DRIP ONTO THE OVEN!)** "But...so easy," you cry. "why not put a sheet of aluminum foil on the bottom of the oven to catch the drips." ...or something? Well, I don't really know why she didn't. Maybe it was because her church felt aluminum was poisonous (particularly in cooking), for they actively discourage its use. Who knows? But, for whatever reason, mother had to bake (and "contaminate" in the oven at home, and then

we took the hot pie, suitable swaddled, with us. **Really...TOTAL *M*I*C*K*E*Y *M*O*U*S*E***, kitchen-wise!

But, Bea was Bea, and you loved her as she was.

Sad end! Bea grew old. Si, who meant to care for her, died first. No one could satisfy her, although many domestics were tried. She ended in a nursing home that reeked of incontinence...far from the fastidiousness that so characterized her life and housekeeping.

Mother also grew old, and eventually could not do her own baking. But, for as long as she lived...and for sometime thereafter...there was/is no aluminum foil in the oven. If the air turns blue (from oven smoke), who cares anyhow. I'll just dedicate it to Mother.



ON EMULATING J.P. MARQUAND, OR ON WEARING WEALTH COMFORTABLY

In a bygone age, when I was young and athletic (touch of fantasy there!), I was employed for a summer by Auburn (Pre-Greenhurst) Country Club. The President that summer was Fisher C. West, a gentleman of ordinary athletic talent **but** superb powers of concentration (said combination made him the finest of local bowlers and a consistent, productive golfer....and a slow, exasperatingly, fine bridge player!). Fisher called to my attention a literary work that, in a sense, mirrored a charming situation in the history of local recreation/golf/tennis--the parallel between John P. Marquand's Life at Happy Knoll and early financial practices of local benefactors, Bill Willenaur and B. O. Fink.

. . . But I can tell you that I admire the grace and tranquility with which they still seem to wear their fortunes.

The latter two gentlemen are the core of this article...their demeanor...the ease with which they wore their considerable wealth. But, more of that later.....

In Marquand's novel, Happy Knoll was the country club and the two protagonists were a pair of wealthy gentlemen--one, presi-

dent of the board. The entire "Happy Knoll" work was the series of letters that they exchanged about club operation, the central theme being "Why we didn't break even this year, and "We would appreciate your annual generosity (a check), as we have in years past' " The work was infused with a gently humor, along with a "chamber-of-horrors" on what could/did go wrong at Bibi's Birthday Bash or Mimi's Madcap Wedding or the like, including the six golf carts in the swimming pool and the regrettable loss of the caterer's van...and...and...! Well, then, as a result of such Scottish calamity (for what else should it be called at a country club?), the wealthy benefactor...and perhaps more than one of them...was asked to generously help balance the books. **And while no known catastrophes attended Auburn Country Club, Fisher informed me that the early years of local golfdom saw Bill and B. O. doing exactly the same thing. When there was a deficit, they kept the operation afloat with their personal generosities!** Perhaps those who golfed...those who tennised...knew of their benefaction; perhaps not. From the very, very limited contact that I ever had with the two Gentlemen (and they **DO** deserve a capital "G", indeed!), I'd guess that they eschewed any publicity or thanks for their kindness.

And, as I have said, Fisher was charmed before, as I was, after his telling me of it.

Similarly, I have been pleased for many years by what I choose to interpret as the good manners of the monied in Auburn. I was sensitive, **but not haunted, (Thank you!)** to the differences in wealth in Auburn. I envied those kids in school who actually **had an allowance.** What luxury! Then, as I grew older, I met some of the adults of money...usually through the fact that they bowled. (Oh, to be sure, I knew of them through my days as "The World's Worst Cad-

die" at the country Club...but rarely did anyone ever caddie for them, least of all me.) Bill Willenaur seemingly eschewed his wealth by playing his rounds with a single, multiply-adjustable club. I do not remember B. O. taking a caddie, although it's quite possible he did...just no small Stackhouses.

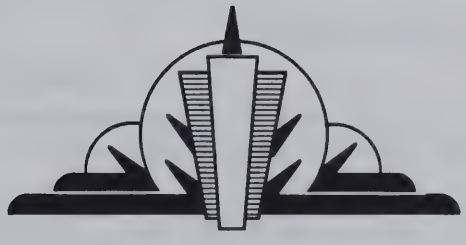
As I became conscious of real wealth (I was probably 26 or 27 when I did, really!), I expressed an opinion to the late Mayor Jerry Oren about the number of bonafide millionaires in Auburn. "Two or three", was my opinion. **"Try a dozen, or more,"** was the Mayor's correction. And then...and then...the fact dawned on me that wealth in Auburn was not expressed as it sometimes is in the movies (later in television?). It was not ostentatious, superior, aloof. **It was comfortable, "go-to-work-everyday".** Mayor Oren said that a goodly part of it had been founded when locals had the acumen to buy stock in the fledgling Lincoln Life Insurance company and then share in its growing prosperity. True, several local fortunes were based on thriving local industries...the Foundry, Rieke's...but I was far more charmed by the quiet little lady on South Jackson Street who had done it the Lincoln way.

I could not now say who has the wealth and who has not...well, I **can** give you

one of the "nots". But I can tell you that I admire the grace and tranquility with which they still seem to wear their fortunes. Occasionally, I hear that they go to Palm Springs or the like, but with so many whom I know going to Florida or Texas or Arizona for the win-

ter...or retirement, the Palm Springs contingent do not stand out very prominently.

A final consideration: If...**if...IF** I had the wealth, would I wear it as well as they? (Not that I'm likely to ever find out!) Since I'll never have to put that to a test, I can equivocally (**not "unequivocally"!**) say that I **would** either get the radio fixed in my 10-year-old Cadillac, or get a new Lincoln Town Car with a functioning radio---probably at the same cost! A little more money in the bank, a little more to give to a favored cause or two. Rare wines and expensive viands? Hardly, for I am marooned on a 1,000 calorie diet for another year, yet, and **must** elect a changed pattern of consumption after that. Wardrobe? At 71, who's to care what I wear? No, I think not. You seem to tempt Fate sometimes when you seek too much. What do I want with a $10,000 funeral? Now really.....!



MY LIFE AMONG THE ELITE (OR WHATEVER!)

Life has not afforded me very many chances to rub elbows with the high and mighty of our world, and I flatter myself (perhaps) that I have not made an utter fool of myself courting the rich and famous, but.....

At least once, and for a prolonged period, I had a sort of back-alley relationship with the "400", or whatever Auburn's version of might have been called. Oh, to be sure, I caddied on the same Country Club patronized by the North Main Street crowd, but that's not really much like sharing. No, I mean the Auburn Hotel...the cuisine.

My mother had been hired, in the summer of 1930, to be 1st cook of the Auburn Hotel. To be sure, that was not the premier kitchen position, that being held by an imported Hungarian Chef. But, in matters Cuisine Americaine, Mama was the honcho. As a part of her employment "contract" with owner, A. D. Faust (much more likely with kindly old Dr. L. N. Geisinger, a silent partner), Mama was to be permitted to give me lunch each school day. (It should be understood that lunch was from 11:45 to 1:00PM,

Only farm kids "brown bagged" it—an action we townies disdained.

and every town kid walked home to lunch. Only farm kids "brown bagged" it---an action we townies disdained. [We had a marvelous capacity for stupidity and prejudice in those days, and we exercised it fully!]

I left my classroom in the Harrison building...and the classes of Misses Dobrick (She who PADDLED me once!), Miss Hawk (a lovely creature who married a Showalter and gave up teaching...a tragic waste, in my juvenile opinion), and Miss Elizabeth Guild (whom fortune did not allow to read this work, as she recently passed...these 63 years later!).....Well, anyhow, I left their classrooms and made my way to the kitchen on the west end of the Hotel building. I was tucked away in some quiet corner, and presently Mama would bring me lunch. I think it likely to have been some lesser costly items from the menu, the owner, A. D. Foust, being Olympic-quality tight/frugal/cheap.

During that lunch hour, I made timid and casual contact with such luminaries of the staff as Old Tom (Logsdon?), the custodian/ engineer; Mary Reasoner, a dishwasher and assistant cook, Dorothy Dannenberg-Cutter, a peppery waitress-chamber maid, the Hungarian chef, and very rarely Mr. Foust or his stately/haughty wife (who had possibly forgotten that she and Mr. Foust began their careers as bell hop and chamber maid in a hotel themselves.) I think that if Mr. Foust paid me any attention at all, it was probably to check on what I had been given for lunch.

Well, anyhow.....for three years, and possibly in excess of 500 days, I ate the same cooking as Ames, Cord,

Faulkner, Little...name your luminaries of the Auburn Auto Company! I am sure that their doings, and those of others of the "Silk Stocking Row" were discussed/gossiped about. What a book I could have written, if only that staff had talked a bit louder...or I had possessed enough experience to understand what I heard!

Odd footnote: I had an older brother and two older sisters. I haven't the foggiest notion where or what they ate for those three years. They may have fasted, for all I can remember (Doesn't seem too likely, does it?)

However it came about, it all ended in 1933 when Mother, in pique over Mr. Foust's "economizing" (by cutting her wages **yet again,** "Walked on him". She was at home briefly, and then began cooking at the Auburn Diner, a much more free, more generous setting. "Dad" Louis Shuman would likely have welcomed me in his kitchen-under-the-Diner, but by then I think that I had become more tolerated by my siblings (one had graduated and gone to work full-time). My brother would graduate in '35, and my remaining sister was probably forced to endure me for lunch. Whatever the case, dinner with/close by the High and Mighty became a fading memory. By the late '30's, Auburn Auto was defunct and the Hotel Dining Room became a lame accessory to a dying hotel. Not too many tears were shed when the presumptuous successor to the Swinford House closed its doors.

ON THE LAND -- 1910

When my Grandfather, Albert Stackhouse (1863-1918), began farming (c.1885), his profession dominated the demographics. More than half of all Americans still lived on the farm. But...the effects of the Industrial Revolution in America were taking a relentless toll of that population base, with a corresponding effect on family size (no longer a need for 8-10-12 children for a labor force) and a regrettable loss of distinctively rural values. Bert Stackhouse's children would mirror that shift: at the time of their deaths (1950-70), all of them were "townspeople", and only one even worked at anything related to farming. The home farm was no longer in family hands, and the status of having been a successful livestock farmer (one), or an unsuccessful tenant farmer (my father), were just memories.

But the date chosen? It was the year, my father a farm boy, reached his 17th birthday. He was within a year of traditional graduation age, but after an unpleasant six grades of schooling, he had dropped out...not that anyone really thought he needed a formal education to farm, anyhow! But.....also.....1910 was safely in the Pre-WWI

More than half of all Americans still lived on the farm. But...the effects of the Industrial Revolution in America were taking a relentless toll of that population base

Era. Mechanization of the farm was limited to such as the reaper, the stationary threshing separator, the silage chopper, and the hay-rake. No tractors to speak of...no combines...no "no till" planting (unless you wanted to be certified "LAZY"!, no "flivvers" or "pick-ups".

Father was raised, from shortly after

his birth in 1893, on a farm at 8041 CR 60...just on the Ohio Line. His painful schoolhouse was about a true mile west of that location, for the little good it ever did him. The farm was 80 acres, adequate but not generous; and it would not accommodate three grown sons and a daughter, when married. When Grandfather died (apoplexy) in 1918, Grandmother had to let the middle son, Uncle "Slick" and his "Heiress", run the farm. Whether through mismanagement or hard times, the farm was gone by the early '30's; and Grandmother ended her days, living with and baby-sitting for her daughter in Hicksville.

The oldest son...he of the livestock (sheep) venture...had married well...a daughter of a prominent land owner in Fairfield Township. My father married (at 21) a girl (late 16's), and was forced to seek a living first as a section hand on the B&O, and then 8 or 9 years of tenant farming in Concord and Wilmington Townships. No real capital...borrowed money and credit...predatory landlords (He was once evicted AFTER putting in the season's crops...to allow the owner's son to qualify for an draft exemption in WWI. Lawsuit. Lost.)...and two disastrous wet autumns

(finally put him "near bankruptcy" and made a city slicker of him...and me [12 weeks old at the time!])

But...I have digressed (shock, dismay, surprise? Only if you are unfamiliar with my style.)

What was farming like in 1910? Well, if you want to cut to the end and avoid another 1,500 words, **just think "AMISH".** For, barring a couple of pieces of the earliest mechanized/powered equipment, farming then was much as the Amish are now...save the social pressure of the "English" world wasn't there. (Faithful readers WILL slog on!)

Every farm was, to some extent, different, yet all shared one thing: the need for massive amounts of labor. Families tended to be large because they needed to be...and even the education of those children was tailored to accommodate the needs of the growing season. In my first teaching assignment, we were let out for the summer on April 15th...an acknowledgment of former days to farming. And, having a heavy Amish component in our school, we understood that there would be many and prolonged absences during corn-picking in November. Though there was much fascinating about the Amish, seeing 14-year-old girls with chapped...even bleeding hands...from picking corn by hand, **AND WITHOUT GLOVES,** rather dulled any misguided admiration I might have had for the Amish!

And, seeing the tears rolling down the cheeks of Katie Bontrager, as on the eve of her 15th birthday, she came to say "Good-bye" to us, her teachers...well, I lost my admiration for the Amish, and I lost my best English student! Forty-seven years later, it still stings. (End of Digression #2)

Another common feature...HORSE POWER! Draft horses, most often of mixed breeding, and driving horses (whose looks, breeding, and performance sometimes mir-

rored our present-day preoccupation with automobiles.) (But, I wonder...did everyone have to have a Morgan then, as the world has now gone "ape" over the pick-up truck and the van?)

Those horses! Frederick Lewis Allen, a fabled chronicler of early 20th Century life, said that if you could be transported back to 1900, that would have been your first observation ["But look at all the horses!"]. Your second, charmingly, would have been, "Look at those skirts!"

Horses, to command you to grow timothy, alfalfa, clover...and to command large areas of your farm for pasture. To be sure, cattle and sheep also could utilize the pasture areas. Horses to command hitching posts on all sides of the Court Square in Auburn, and before every business that cared for the farm "custom". Stables (not less that 7 in Auburn), and blacksmiths (at least 3 well-known ones) according to my Grand Source, Silas Teddy Walters.

And such wonderful "amendment" to your garden...to the fields of your farm...as a by-product of this equi-culture!

(Digression #?)...My late friend, Russell "Doc" Guinther, noted that the use of draft horses did not die out as quickly or as totally as one might suspect. Doc noted that in many large cities, draft horses were still in use to pull one-horse carts in alleyways too narrow for motorized vehicles. So there!

Horses...that could, in many circumstances, be "programmed"...to bring you home from a late nite date, you sleeping and Dobbin clopping...that could learn a milk-route (in town, of course) so well that a new milkman

could learn much of the route by where the horse chose to stop (See Thornton Wilder's play, "Our Town".)...that pretty much knew the routine of plowing or wagon pulling or what-not, so that they took a minimum of direction. And, horses that could reproduce themselves (Try, oh just try, getting your John Deere to do that!) And, there could be an affectionate bond between man and animal that let the declining years be spent "out to pasture", rather than "off to the 'knackers' (British for a slaughterhouse/ dog food manufacturer...ugh!")

...And what was life like for Grandma, on the farm, in 1910? She, a woman of 45, was doing all of the housework herself...

But...it WAS a two-hour trip from Grandpa's to the County Seat; it was an 18-hour trip from Grandpa's to Uncle Nuell Smith's at Coldwater...with a walking start to let the horses get limbered up, a "turn down" at every stream to let them drink and blow, dinner and supper on the road (of Grandma's heavy slabs of bread with heavy slabs of meat, and wedges of Aunt Bessie's pies). (When Father and Grandfather came to town for the wedding license in 1914, they came from St. Joe by train, it being January and horses being slow.) And if the danger of run-aways existed still, they did not match the carnage of our present-day highway deaths.

One further "horse-observation"...roads were dirt or gravel, and rather more forgiving to Dobbin's hooves than asphalt or concrete. Not until Old State road 427, Waterloo to Auburn, was paved with concrete in 1917 (from CR 36 to Jefferson Street in Auburn)...by Peter Shingledecker and Silas Teddy Walters...did the horse have to be shod for such hard surfaces.

And what was life like for Grandma, on the farm, in 1910? She, a woman of 45, was doing all of the housework herself, her daugh-

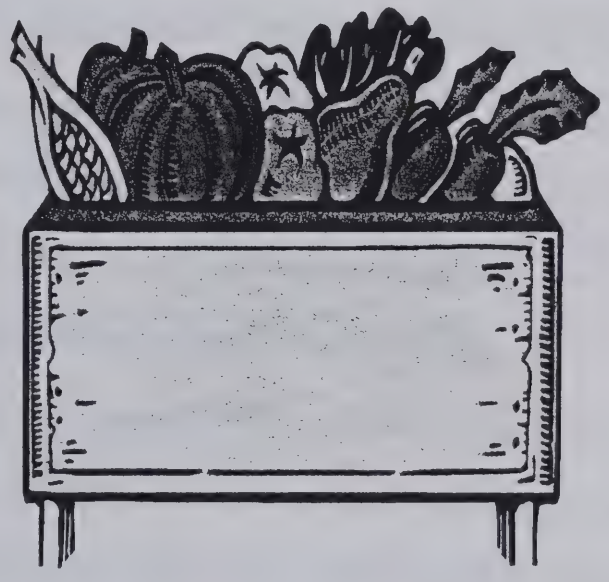
ter, Bessie, having now married. Cooking (no great reputation here, thank you!) She was a bad butter maker, for a fact. My father always preferred preserves (having been made ill on rancid butter as a child!). Washing, ironing, darning, sewing for at least two sons and her husband...it must have kept her busy. When the fateful passing of Grandfather came in 1918, she had to choose between the two younger sons as to which would manage the farm...Father, Mother, and two children...or Uncle Slick and his Heiress. She chose the latter; she chose sooooo wrongly (the heiress could **NOT** cook worth a hoot, and additionally, hated her mother-in-law.) By 1930, the results were in; the farm had failed and had to be sold; Uncle Slick and the Heiress were living in one of the properties in Hicksville that she had inherited from her mother, and getting on venomously with her other sister-in-law (not my mother.) (Poor Uncle Slick was also becoming a local legend in the annals of cuckoldery!) (Notice how smoothly this can glide into digression!) [Oh well...<be hung for a sheep as well as a lamb>...Fate plays grisly tricks.] On the day that their divorce suit was first heard, Aunt "Heiress" was under a bit of strain: her latest paramour **was being buried** that same day. Uncle Slick relented, they ended their marital marathon together, and upon his death, she discovered that he had named the hated sister-in-law as a replacement beneficiary on his insurance, **and that she would not pay over the proceeds...AT FIRST.** Then she DID make sure that ALL of them would be used for the funeral and the marker. I do not know if she finally allowed both names on the marker.)

(And, what is the Olympic record for digression?)

When Grandma fed her family...in an age when one did not just dip into the A&P on 5-minutes notice...what were her sources? Well, of course, the garden, enhanced by "product of the stable". Lots of good, substan-

tial things, but always "in season". No California, Florida, or Peruvian produce out of season. Head lettuce...not really. Some fine leaf lettuce in early summer, but salads as we know them...NOT. But...cabbage products...cole slaws, sour krauts, boiled cabbage with ham or beef (corned or not). Cabbage, like plenteous potatoes, apples, winter pears...all kept well in the root cellar. Carrots, parsnips, turnips...simply left in the soil, mulched, and taken as needed. Any other excess of the garden...confined to cans and jars. Slaughtering was done when the weather became cool enough in autumn, and besides smoking and pickling, even sausage could be preserved by frying and covering in jars with melted lard. There being no hue and cry about cholesterol, lard was the preferred shortening...and ggs were consumed as available, again free of health guidelines.

Pastries...well, not to win a Pillsbury Bake-off. But...Aunt Bessie did bake a dozen or so pies of a Saturday morning, that they might have pie for dessert **THREE meals** a day...and her brothers sometimes "raided" her for a full pie apiece when they came home from a Saturday night "on the town" [?]...that is, until she baked them a pie full of dried beans, and they got the idea. And...loaves and loaves and



loaves of SUBSTANTIAL, home-made bread. Bakeries were very few and far between...and in town...and their product simply did not compare in weight or taste to home-made.

In looking at the farm cooking...at the seeming-"threshers' proportions" served at most meals, one must recall that our present 2,000

calories-for-the-sedentary male was **only ONE-THIRD** of the daily requirement of a hard-working farmer. Gargantuan work load=gargantuan eating habits=(sadly) shortened life span (rather too often).

But...now...it's spring, and what was Grandfather doing? Walking the land, I suppose, to survey winter's results. Had the freezing and thawing mellowed the furrows of last fall's plowing? Any obviously weak spots in drainage that might require tiling? And, in the barn, repairing equipment, sharpening plow shares, repairing harness. In the kitchen (?), sprouting sample seeds between layers of wet cloth to see which seeds, saved from previous years, were still viable. (Grandfather COULD have bought his seed, but why buy when you can select the best of this year's crop for next year's seed? Pick the fullest, straightest ears of corn, and save the money. ([And, the age of hybrids is not yet upon us, making this easily possible.])

And when the weather broke...and spring was upon the land...the horses made it possible to get onto the land much quicker (than present-day power equipment), and without harmful compacting of the soil). First crop...likely oats. and, if it were a reasonable spring, you were certified as "slothful" in neighbors eyes if your oats were not in by April 15th. Given the lack of our present tailored-season varieties (and the danger of an early autumn), you HAD to be with it quickly! The wheat you had sowed the previous autumn was showing in a green sheen on the fields, hopefully having escaped damage by excessive freezing and thawing of the soil (Pray for a dependable snow cover!).

And, in the barn (s), ewes were lambing, sows were farrowing, cats were littering, cows were calving (not quite as frequently), mares were foaling (even less frequently)...and maybe, in the house, the farmwife was knitting booties! I cannot AUTHORITATIVELY state that the

human component of farming had any predictable season for burgeoning forth, but if June is the month of romance, then March would be the month of birth, n'es pas?

(Digression #?)...Hmmmmmnnnnn...I was conceived in November of '23, shortly after Father's first Potato Disaster (Wet autumn, 40 bushels dug from a crop that begin with 40 bushel of seed potatoes). Was I some sort of Natural Consolation Prize?

Onward..ever onward!

In one interesting way, Grandfather had it far superior to today's "city slicker"...a combination "exercise studio" and renewable fuel source...known as the wood lot. Remember the possible 6,000 calorie demand? Well, since heating and cooking fuel was likely wood, cut from your own wood lot (via ax, cross-cut, and "buck" saw)...that, along with all the other hard labor obviated any need for a health-club membership. Likewise, Grandma, kneading the bread, washing clothes on a washboard, sweeping floors with a hand broom...it isn't likely that Jane Fonda's workout tapes would have found much of a market there! And, oh yes..wood smoke likely offended less than later coal smoke, and there is an appealing perfume in the first wood smoke of autumn...I say there is!

And the education of the farm child? Well, having his schoolhouse rarely more than a mile from his home (see early Dekalb County school history with nearly 90 schools (!), set about 9 to a full 36 square mile township); well, anyhow, he missed the questionable thrill of long school bus rides. For a few who had the aspiration...or the money...there were academies in Newville, St. Joe, Auburn, and elsewhere...tuition usually required. The Auburn Academy? On the west lawn of Eckhart Library "park". St. Joe? The old High School building. Newville? About where the Church is now.

Beyond local academies, some very few went on to universities, or to "Normal Schools"

(Tri-State) to become teachers. Some would begin teaching first, and then put in a few weeks or a few summers at the Normal to solidify their credentials.

But, for the most of the youth, 8 grades were enough, if they stayed even that long. The farm was their living; there they would learn what they needed to know for that age. The girls would marry, many before 18; and it was felt they could learn their skills at their mothers' sides most effectively. And how well did they both do? Rather well, I should think, for they are the progenitors of today's farmers, for whom I have a healthy respect.

A spiritual life? A cultural life? The finer things? Well, now, those rural folk of 80 years ago WERE of strong and practiced religions. The Catholic community around St. Michaels Church...The German Lutheran community in Fairfield Township; the Church of Christ folk of Coburn Corners-Alton community are but three examples of that. 1910 was the end of the Edwardian Age, itself just a continuation of the Victorian Age, and **THE** values were home and family and morality (not such a bad idea for today, although they do at times seem on the endangered list.) If and when a Revival...or a "Chataqua-type" "tented" in their area, they were an enthusiastic audience...unless there was a crop to be got in. School social functions...church social functions...the ubiquitous Strawberry Festivals and Ice-cream Socials....and Weddings, and (Yes!) Funerals, "drew" well.

Oh, please do not think there was no strain of cussedness in that age; there was! Read, in a yellowed paper somewhere, about the celebrated Concord Incest Case of 1911! But, still....it was a pretty good time to raise your kids in that pretty-good rural setting.

For, (blessed words to follow!) **in summary,** no planes, no cars, no television, no radio, no New Hampshire Primary, no daily papers, no National Inquirer...none of these yet

intruded on the tranquil life of the farmer. He still believed, (as he thought George Washington had advised) in avoiding "foreign entanglements". Grandfather's life, indeed, hardly moved at any greater pace than Washington's. The Age of Tranquillity was yet upon him. For a few years yet, it will be "State Fair" for him and his world. Let his Blue Boy perk up his ears at his beloved sow, let everyone spike Mrs. Frake's mincemeat to blue-ribbon perfection, and let them enjoy their innocence! It will not come again.

But, where do I find more on the era...the subject? Well, there are the aforementioned books of Frederick Lewis Allen covering the Early Century from several different angles.

And:

The Land Remembers by Ben Logan, Heartland press, 1975,

Paperback (Waander's Bookmark can order it for you).

State Fair by Phil Strong, the book, the movie, both good.

"The Revolt of Mother", "The Bedquilt" by Dorothy Canfield Fisher,

short stories.

Malabar Farm by Louis Bromfield.

With a little luck, try listening to Your Grandparents.

Attend an Old Settlers' Day at the Fair.

REFLECTIONS ON A LADY DOCTOR

Some years agone (artful historical expression!), I had the pleasure of attending a remarkable Annual Meeting of the DeKalb County Historical Society...in a remote country church (?). (Frankly, I don't remember where it WAS held, and it's not really germane to the tale, anyhow!)

The company, as always, was pleasant. The program, ***REMARKABLE***. A number of young ladies/matrons of the Fort Wayne area presented verbal portraits of Area Women of the Civil War, and a remarkable lot they were, too!

The portrayal that most caught my attention was that of Vesta Swarts, MD, a former Civil War nurse and bonafide humanitarian. For, you see, Dr. Swarts was "Auburn" and for more than 40 years after her graduation from the Fort Wayne Medical College, c. 1874, practiced medicine in our village.

. . . It's always a bit risky to speculate on a lady's age even for high historical purpose. . .

During the ten year gap between the cessation (another historical gem!) of the war and her training, she must also have been about the founding of her family.

It's always a bit risky to speculate on a lady's age even for high historical purpose...but...IF she were old enough to nurse during the was (1861-65), she must have been born in the late '30's. Schooling in the '70's, she was at least in her mid-30's. She lived into her mid-70's at least and spent the aforementioned 40 years alleviating the ills of

Auburn...much of it from her place of practice on East 6th Street...North side just off Main...at her celebrated "Auburn Sanitary Baths".

"Baths?"..."**Massage???**... Well, dear friends, it had none of the questionable connotations that it may have now! Dr. Swarts advertised (in a charming window placard (of which I have a copy). "***Turkish Baths"***. "Electric, Thermal, Steam Baths", and "Medicated and Mineral Waters", as well as "Mechanical appliances and skilled attendants who give the **MASSAGE TREATMENT** (her emphasis), will be furnished to such persons in search of health, as may desire the advantages of a good **SANITARIUM, with its** ***REST***BATHS***and***MASSAGE. "

"A limited number of patients requiring a course of MEDICAL or SURGICAL treatment, will be received. Board and rooms furnished." Thoroughly moral that, yes?

But, said my confidential old informant, her son was in practice in his offices on the corner of Main and 6th...just next door...dealing quite often with the venereal

consequences of so many single men, living in rooming houses about town! Hey, now! Not in Auburn! (Well, now...every time I doubted the accuracy or veracity of my source [and checked it out elsewhere], HE WAS RIGHT ON THE MONEY!)

WITH A LITTLE BIT OF HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

. . . I became a writer.

For, you see, left on my own, I would have continued on my same familiar path...writing an occasional piece for some special purpose...a tribute to a deceased school board member...some publicity for a horse show, or a club meeting or project...a script for a shuttlebus tour during ACD, but, nothing that could properly be gathered into a "book".

For years...for many years...kind people would occasionally say, "But, you should write a book." And having heard the flattering words, I did nothing.

Then John Martin Smith began his monumental County History and Mr. Craig Taylor of McComb-Dilgard-Cline suggested that I should write a series of short pieces...for use in community service

. . . For years...for many years...kind people would occasionally say, "But, you should write a book." . . .

ads...recounting some of the tidbits of history that were not of enough consequence to be included in a serious history...but still might deserve to be remembered. "8 or 9", was his request. It was somewhat new territory...a somewhat different audience...for me; I wrote

about 18 or 19, fully expecting that he would pick and choose among them. Well, of the eight or nine asked for, he eventually had 25 printed. I had kept writing, endowed with the marvelous "source" that I had and the vague parameters given me by Craig.

The "Source"? The remarkable Silas Teddy Walters, 1903-1993, owner of a near

total-recall of town events from the early 1900's to the date of his death. He willingly, ...joyously...shared his memories, some of them rather fantastic. **And, I found that whenever I grew skeptical and put them to the test, THEY <u>WERE ACCURATE</u>!** I would suppose that 1/4 of the more than 120 articles to date are based on Ted's memories, combined with the reminiscences of my parents, many other generous oldsters, and my own observations. I seem to have a very long-lasting source.

But, into book form? Enter two remarkable ladies, Mrs. Sirlene Smith and Rachel Roberts. Mrs. Smith, Eckhart Librarian, asserted strongly that the ads, as printed in the Star should be gathered and put on the shelves of the Library. In so doing, I got a chance to rectify some painful condensation that the Indianapolis advertising firm (first four ads only) had done. I conceived putting in the original article wherever space considerations had caused its abbreviation.

One of the ads had been of Art Smith's famous landing in Auburn on October 10, 1912. Learning that Mrs. Walter McComb was relative of the Smiths, I pursued and

exploited a trove of Art Smith memorabilia, now in the hands of Herbert Wertman of Portage, Michigan. It was to be a gift to the McCombs for their kind sponsorship of the series. Well.....

When Rachel Roberts met the Art Smith piece, (now grown to nearly 50 pages), she felt it had commercial possibilities. Sadly, the several publishers we trolled it by did not take the bait...but we got some distinguished rejection slips! ACD Museum was kind enough to publish two long articles, excerpted from the work...kind encouragement from Sharon Vick.

Since the Indianapolis firm had titled the first four ads as "Auburn Reflections", I accepted the "reflection" designation, and the subsequent two longer collections of articles have featured that word in their titles, also. Hence, Auburn Reflections, On Further Reflection, Reflections in a Cooking Spoon, and such proposed works as Son of Reflections, Grandson of Reflections, and Second Cousin of Reflections, Twice Removed (?)!!

And then, in a delightful development, I began to hit the "Chicken-a-la-King" Circuit. I began to receive ego-building invitations to public presentations. I decided to model anything that I did on the celebrated First Drama Quartet of 40 years back...a group (Charles Laughton, Agnes Morehead, Tyrone Power, Charles Boyer) that simply **READ...or appeared to read...**literary works. For, you see, I believe that an audience is likely to more applaud someone who reads well, than someone who speaks well!

So, over a four year period, I have been booked to appear on the Court Square, doing Art Smith's Elopement excerpt; before the Entre Nous twice, the Rotary Club twice, the various Lions groups thrice, the Ft. Wayne Jewish Federation, the Noble County Democrat Women's Club, Heimach Center twice, Library groups twice, DeKalb County Histori-

cal Society, St. Joseph' School 6th graders, and enough other groups to reach a total of between 20 and 25.

In that time, I have also enjoyed presenting seven full sets of the four works to various groups...and I must have gifted more than 150 people with one or more of the works. I have a rule, you see, that if anyone serves as a source for me, they shall not be allowed to pay for that work.

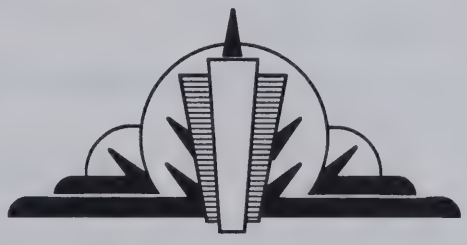
So, does this make me the last of the big spenders? Not really, but I didn't get into the game to make money. I DO enjoy the presentations, the compliments.

But...there are more who gave to me, that I might give to my readers/listeners. My nephew in Kendallville, Mr. Richard Houser, put the first collection of articles into computerized form for the printing. My niece in Manhattan, Illinois, Mrs. Cindy Lake, did the same for the Art Smith piece. And the, a fine broth of a boy in Florence, Kentucky...and now, Fort Wayne, one Barry Bartels...and his blushing bride, Mrs. Jenny Parish Bartels, put the art work to "Reflections", and did the art and "typesetting" of both "on Further....." and "Cooking Spoon", **which was the direct result of Barry's comment, "We could make a lot of money with a cookbook!"** (The lad's a bit of a dreamer, but he has **such** a biddable nature.)

And, what I have done to this moment is to omit the single, most important contributor of all----Mrs. Judy Waanders of Waander's Bookmark, of Dekalb High School, and of the present Eckhart Library

Board of Trustees. For...without this lady, there would never have been a second, or third, or fourth...or any subsequent work. For, far more daunting to me than just writing the material is merchandising it. I hadn't the foggiest notion of how to get anything back out of my writing, and I could not have afforded to continue without some return. **VANITY PUBLISHING <u>IS EXPENSIVE,</u>** it is! She so very graciously offered to handle my stuff through her Auburn store, and we were away and flying. I know of no one whose business acumen and literary taste is superior to hers!

Is the work anywhere close to an end? "Quien sabe?" as they say in the spaghetti Westerns. Writer's block is as foreign to me as ...as.....as I-don't-know-what. Nice people keep reminding me of new subjects for articles. Fine new sources come to light regularly. And, inexplicable, the public seems to keep buying the stuff. I suppose that as long as I don't go bankrupt publishing my own stuff, I can continue....even given my profligate ways.



AND JUST A LITTLE OFF THE TOP, MURPH/PINKIE/PECK/HERM!

The other day I was seated in Peck's Barber Shop, not-too-patiently awaiting my turn (and trying to think how to sustain my '15 minutes of fame' [as Andy Warhol once predicted it]). I was salving the monotony of waiting by exchanging opinions with my fellow waitees...well, actually, **I was talking** and they were listening, a not-too-rare occurrence in my circles. And...and...it occurred to me that I had long (sorta) been interested in old-time barber shops, and yet had never written about them. A target...a **"palpable target"!**...as the Bard had one of the minors in Hamlet cry out. (Touch of culture there!)

Well, then, what do you remember about the barber shop, circa 1910?

No fluorescent lights...probably electric, rarely oil lamps, ceiling fan;

"Pigeon-hole" storage rack for your very own shaving mug;

> . . . I found myself charmed by the tempo of town life, that allowed the "movers and shakers" of the town to make a daily appearance at the barbershop for their morning shave. . .

Colored lotion bottles;

"Kiddie seat board", to be laid across the arms when a wee-one was brought in for a cut;

Hand clippers, and lots of scissors and

combs in disinfectant baths;

Shampooing sink, with lotsa white towels;

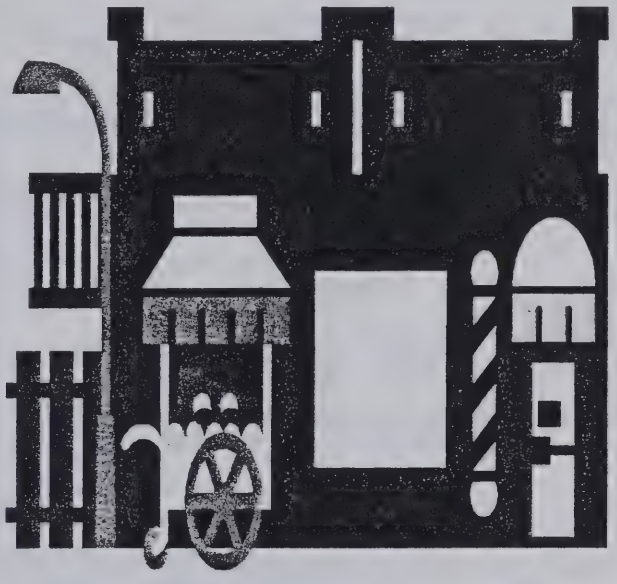
Bootblack stand (big city stuff, this!).

Oiled-wooden floors, or "serviceable" linoleum, with "inverted halo" of hair clippings, with lotsa white and gray!

Mandatory pot-bellied stove, surrounded in season with late Victorian

lounge lizards, prepared to discuss nearly anything at the drop of an opinion. Viz: "Will **Ol' Teddy Roosevelt** make a run at the White House in 1912, now that he's done shootin' every varmint in Africa ...and h a d j a heard of that crazy professor at one o' them 'Ivory League' colleges who thought them rich kids should study, 'sted of spending' all their time eatin', an' worse(!) at their clubs?" [Author's note: they "booted-him-up" to a harmless government job (Governor of New Jersey!), and he became President of the United States, 1913 to 1921...**Thomas Woodrow Wilson!**]

But, looking back to well before my birth (a trick I learned from my oldest sister!), I found myself charmed by the tempo of town life, that allowed the "movers-and-shakers" of



the town to make a daily appearance at the barber shop for their morning shave. Few, if any, barber shops will now offer a shave at any price, but in 1910, they were the bread-and-butter of the barber. You needed a haircut not too often, but you needed a shave daily. So.....there on the "back bar" was the rack in which your shaving mug was kept. When you entered, usually close to your daily appointed

time ("One-chair, no-waiting!"), you made a minimum of conversation with the hangers-on, and then took your barber chair. Tilted to prone, you were "cape-d", and lathered with your own badger-hair brush and from your own mug. Lathered, then hot toweled for a minute or two; lathered again, and you heard the barber stropping afresh the razor for you. Then, with a feather touch, the barber "stroked" the lather and stubble from your-jowls...more carefully on your vulnerable neck...and most carefully from under your nose (if you weren't mustach-i-oed). Extra close? He could wet your face with a lubricant (usually water would do) and go over the areas again, feeling with his sensitive fingers for any stray stubble; but once was usually enough. Then, another warm towel to soothe, followed by a cold towel to tighten up the skin. Follow with some gently scented, non-stinging "after-shave" lotion; comb the hair, straighten up the chair, "de-cant" the passenger, brush with whisk broom to finish the job, and send him off to his bank/hardware/dry goods store.

The cost? I'm not even a-gonna' tell you. You wouldn't believe it anyhow!

The effect? For the necessary 15 minutes or so, you had partaken of **sheer, HEDONISTIC pleasure.** If you have not lain in a barber chair and had **someone else** shave you!!!!!...well, it can only be equated to the proverbial **"Hog in a cool puddle on a hot day!"!!!**

And hey! If you needed a haircut (a "trim") and your barber was one of the "scissors-only" barbers, it's another hog in another cool puddle. I knew a young barber in the Army, c. 1943, who gave that sort of a haircut. After just one cut like that, I knew what "the Rockerfellers" enjoyed.

And what became of these remarkable practices? Progress, sadly; the electric clippers, King Gillette and his insidious blades,

Barbasol, Aqua Velva...whatever.

Score that: One more for Progress, one less for Romance.

.....

.....

Study Questions:

1. How comfortable would those customers have been if they had ever seen the Broadway play, "Sweeny Todd (The Demon Barber of Fleet Street")?

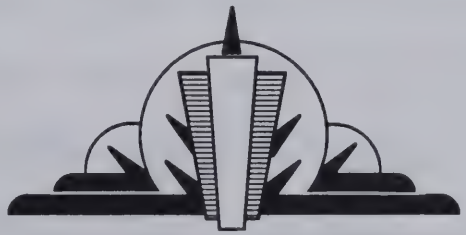
2. Did anyone really have a razor for every day of the week, like 'Charleston Blue' in "Come Back, Charleston Blue!" And.....**would they have seen them used the same way?**

3. What sort of commentary followed a near-miss on the spittoon? Or smelly feet near the pot-bellied stove?

4. What did a barber **really** think when a mother brought in a panicked/ frightened/ uncooperative child for his first haircut? When a "flapper" came in for a "bob", c. 1925?

5. What did **my mother** say to my father and my aunt when they sneaked me into a barbershop and had my **shoulder-length, red curls** cut when I was four?

6. How many sticks of chewing gum...how many pieces of candy would a barber pass out in a year to juvenile customers (who had been "good", sitting on the "booster-board" [placed across the arms of the barber chair to bring you up to 'cutting height'])?



JONES-Y REVISITED

This article was originally titled, "The Last Time I Say Jones-y", and was written in the summer of '91, just after Robert Jones had gone to a nursing home for his terminal battle with cancer. To my chagrin, I didn't go to see him then, nor again until he was "laid out" in the Funeral Home. The sentiments herein expressed are no less commanding to me now than they were then.

"An elderly friend (and a star roomer for 20 years!) recently began his terminal nursing home stay. His trip has launched me on a visceral and morbid train of thought..."How will I react when his moment melancholy becomes mine? What will I most regret leaving behind me?"

"The Freedom.....surely it will be the loss of freedom. The airy freedom to rise when you will, or no. The freedom to eat what you will, and when you will, and where you will, and with whom you will...or no. The freedom to conduct your bodily functions, be they quaint or bizarre, in the privacy you have always known...rather than in the presence of underpaid strangers. The freedom to nap at 10 AM or watch television until 2 AM without

. . . The freedom...surely it will be the freedom. . .

exciting comment or censure. Yes, surely, the Freedom."

"For, when again shall I play the "Great Gate of Kiev" at massive volume: my kitchen will never again writhe under the impact of too much garlic: my beloved, overaged, thoroughly comfortable garments must yield to something readily washable, starch-

able, indelibly-inkable---as though they might have several patients of MY dimensions! Such freedoms I must lose?"

"And my intellectual life? Who will discuss my New Yorker's with me, or my New York Review of Books---at least while I may remain "with it" enough to discuss anything? And Sporting News, SI, Smithsonian, Geographic?"

And what of my beloved car, and the patchwork of roads it and I have known. Are we quits? I suppose so, but knowing this is not accepting it.

And then, what of my few and scattered friends? They knew me for my independence and my willingness to help them in their needs. How will they weather my becoming needy, and dependent, and whining, and not-me...as I have seen others do? As such, I could not endure myself: I must understand if they cannot.

"I'm not looking forward to visiting that friend (and I never did), for in him I see my predictable future. But...unless I am given the rare miracle of being hit by a falling star or summer lightning, I suspect his present to be my future."

It's not the way a body ought to go.

"COWED" COWED BY IT ALL

Given half the chance, most of us will romanticize the past...gaze longingly at it with rose-colored glasses. It probably never was as rosy/charming/innocent as we tell of it; indeed, there's a horrible possibility...no, certainty...that future nostalgiacs will do the same with THIS time.

Recently, I found yet another example of how I had been doing just this. I had taken such a mundane chore as milking Old Bossy and sugar-coated it. Howso?

A forward-looking young farmer...that is, a prominent young dairy farmer...asked me to contribute a piece to an agricultural series, being printed in the Evening Star. I write at the drop of a milk bucket (bit of farm-style whimsy there!), and so I spun off some 2500 words on Farming, Circa 1910. "Mystical Communion" with Farm Animals" was the part of it all. I seated the farmer on his one-legged milking stool (a.k.a. Purdue lab stool), had him press his forehead into Bossy's sleek-and-hairy side, and had him drawing forth the "skim", 1%, 2%, 4% (or you fancy Jerseys), 6-7%! (Astute City Slicker that I

> . . . I suppose that many farmers have learned the above through coarse experience...literally crying (out) over spilled milk. . .

am, I still am amazed that Bossy can so easily decide which of those "strengths" of the butterfat she is going to "issue"...but that's a concern for a later date!) But, I digress...a totally rare experience for me!

So Young Hiram/Farmer Brown/ David Harum...whoever(!)...poises on the stool, aiming a white streak of nourishment at the barn cat...or the feet of any nearby City Slicker! **And, for the Communion Bit, he keeps his forehead pressed to Bossy's side...sort of like Mr. Spock doing the "mind-meld" bit on Star Trek.**

When I tried to run this bit of romanticizing past my young dairy farmer, he (innately politely, but **clearly,** nonetheless) informed me that it had rather a more practical side. "Good-bye" Romance; "Hello" Farm Practicality. **Communion, Hell! "YOUNG HIRAM'S 'EARLY WARNING' SYSTEM!"** It would seem that not all Bossies are models of warmth and decorum! They ***KICK***THEY DO***!.** So.....If you want to know when bossy is preparing some of her fancier barnyard ballet footwork, you keep your head in contact with her. **She "telegraphs" her moves; she cannot kick**

without signaling it by a tensing of her side muscles, and THAT you can feel. So, fore(head) warned, you just lean back out of the way, taking the bucket with you!

Of course, I suppose that many farmers have learned the above through coarse experience...literally crying (out) over spilled milk. (For further whimsical reflection on this subject, corner some humorist and have him

tell you the elaborate joke about "The Oklahoma Quaker and the Cow". (Yes, I know that you'd think that a Quaker should have an Eastern- Pennsylvania accent, but it's funnier to hear "thaaoow" and "caaoow", Tulsa-style! [In telling the fore(head) going joke, be sure to have checked out whether there are any Methodists in your audience, and make **VERY SURE** that they have a sense of humor!]

Casual questions for the above topic:

1. Do they feed poorer feeds...poorer pastures...to Bossy to enable her to produce the skim milk?

2. What-ever can they feed Her to produce non-fat dried milk?

3. If bossy stepped-on and scraped your kid's foot, would you:

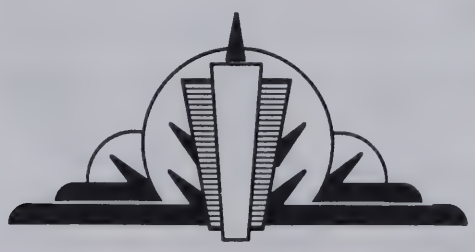
A. Suspend all operations and call for the EMS

B. Call your lawyer and sue yourself

C. apply fresh cow manure to it, and go on milking!

(And, dear reader, have you ever got a surprise coming here!)

In re: Methodists and jokes: One does well to remember R. Nelson Snider's dictum about religious jokes---"When telling (such) jokes, be sure to include every congregation in your jokes. If you offend anyone, it is far more likely because you omitted them than otherwise!"



"SEVENTEENTH SUMMER" TIMES FOUR

In a lovely, by-gone era when I was accumulating "num-nums" for my old age (teaching and contributing toward my pension fund), one of my duties (from 1949 to 1962, at least) was to direct the class play. I have already confessed, in previous works ("The Little Rude Schoolhouse"), to my inadequacies at this assignment...and they were manifold! Fortunately, I was largely ignorant...as were all of the administrators who made such assignments...to the real qualifications of a play director. So, adventurously/buoyantly/ignorantly - I charged forth to lead my juvenile Thespians...or whatever.

The play with which I had the most fun (or did the most damage, according to my critics) was Maureen Daly's "Seventeenth Summer". Mrs. Daly had, as an actual 17-year-old, written this seemingly-shallow, certainly-sentimental tale of that summer in the life of a sheltered young lady. It was very popular with the high school girls of that age, telling as it did of first love in conflict with reality. The heroine, Angie, had been educated in a private school (an experience then unknown to us), was preparing for college in

> . . . There were about three times in my career when I felt that I had let my students down...would have given anything to undo the damage. . .

the fall, and had struck up a summer romance with handsome Jack, the delivery boy. Would she give up her plans for college to stay home in the little Wisconsin town, inasmuch as he could not afford to go to college with her?

Angie's family was pure "Father-Knows-Best" quality. Mature, settled, happy oldest sister; Margaret; unhappy, borderline neurotic next-oldest sister, Loraine; and semi-bratty, Tom-boyish younger sister, Kitty. Father and Mother: cut from cookie molds, with lots of sugar on top. Standard, soap-opera friends--the catty Jane-with designs on Jack; Tony, the wolf; comfortable, settled Art (engaged to oldest sister). And...lots of sentimental, home-style poetics in the prologues to each of the acts, and the epilogue.

Well, first time out of the barn--Leo High School, fall production, 1954. **TYPE CASTING!!!---without me ever realizing it!** The students who tried out perfectly fit the parts, the more so because most of them were really acting themselves. The neurotic sister HAD been "in analysis"; the beautiful Angie had never had a date; Jack was the popular, all-American boy type [though of a family that certainly could have sent him to college].

We performed it on the grotesque new

Leo High School stage; it was a fine production, in every opinion except the principal's. His comment, "We like our plays funny here at Leo!" (Well, for a spring production, I gave him "Hillbilly Courtship" with a set of sight gags that would have embarrassed Milton Berle!) But, the first "Summer" **was** good, even if a bit short on the snobbish "redeeming

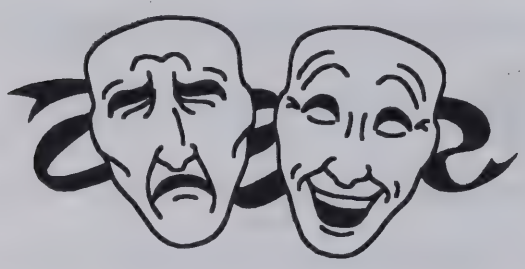
social merit". On rare occasions, now some 40 years later, I run into Art or Kitty (I later taught children of each of these in yet other schools)...and I remember them better for the play than anything else.

Performance #2...Riverdale, c. 1959. Nothing succeeds (and repeats) like success. This time, mischance struck my cast early, with surprisingly fine results. I had picked the play in Spring, for production the following autumn...largely because I had a mint-quality Kitty (the 11-year-old sister.) Being the clever, adaptive All-American teacher (that I wish I were), I compensated with a very baggy sweatshirt and pigtail braids, along with lavishly applied freckles.

My Angie, a savior of the Spring play when she changed from prompter to lead (following a case of "mono" by my leading lady), carried it off beautifully. Beautifully! - even when Mother failed to give Kitty the proper exit cue and left her on-stage during Jack and Angie's "reconciliation scene" in the third act. Poor Kitty looked like she had egg on her face, but it was Mother's fault. Angie sensed the problem and manufactured stage action and dialogue that sent Kitty off, albeit on the wrong side of the stage. Poor Kitty had to pelt her way clear around the back of the school building to get to the proper side for her next entry on-stage! But...Mother did make scrumptious blueberry muffins for every rehearsal and for the performances, guaranteeing dramatic authenticity, at least!

And then I went to Garrett High School, for the last of my "Summers", c. 1959. I cringe yet! Oh, it was a fine play, with largely good memories and good performances. It was me. Angie needed a piece of luggage for act III...her getting-ready-for-college scene. Sweet Susie Smith, my Angie, brought a new Samsonite suitcase, vinyl-sided.

(There is a very worthwhile rule that you do not ever use new-ANYTHING as a prop in a play, damage being such a possibility. We ignored it, to Susie's sorrow.) I was making signs for the play, using a re-fillable, felt-tip pen. Somehow the oil-based ink splattered, and Susie's new



suitcase was spotted prominently. Bad, bad, bad is how I felt...and so did Susie. There were about three times in my career when I felt that I had let my students down...would have given anything to undo the damage. That was one of them.

The play was a success again, with otherwise pleasant memories. Jack, for instance, had a speech impediment in everyday life that he totally overcame to give a fine performance. Mother had a magnificent corona of hair, which she dressed meticulously each day. One of the girls took it down during an "off-stage" moment for mother, and then unexpectedly I called for the "mother" scene. She came flying on stage, looking like Crystal Gale...That "Mother" did her exceptional (for a teen-ager) preparation for her role: She "stalked" the school's mature librarian for days, observing her "mature woman" walk, and then perfectly duplicating it on-stage. Not such a great feat in anyone's opinion?...Then try describing how an adult's walk differs from a teenager's! ...And, the School Board raised the **next** director's salary **at my request.** And I went out of the directing business. .....And then I went to Waterloo, and talked my friend, Mary Evelyn Moore, into doing "Summer #4". (I handled the set construction, publicity, etc.....I think.)

Well, Angie was a very-gingery Ginger Haislip. Jack was a non-dewey Dewey Karnes. On Friday night (dress rehearsal), Dewey ate a green onion, deliberately, just before the

"reconciliation/love scene" in Act III, the scene of *****the KISS!!!***** Ginger remarked about it when she came offstage. "Well, Ginger, if you want to try it, I think we can arrange for you to pay Dewey back," said the 295 pound mischief-maker. And so, it came to pass, at the Saturday night performance, that Ginger chewed a clove of raw garlic just before the big scene. Her line was, with **heavy aspiration, "OHHHHHHH, JACK!!!!!"**, and she kissed him soundly. Reaction? As Jack exited the scene, he looked at **me (!)**, and remarked, **"YOU RAT!!!"** Discipline the boy for a disrespect to a teacher? Don't be dumb! I was delighted.

I returned to Garrett High School again, then to Eastside High School, and finally to DeKalb High School; and never ventured onto the stage again. But, the other day, I was looking through a box of personal jewelry, and there were a pair of beautiful cufflinks set with a row of red stones and engraved "Seventeenth Summer". Just let the Rockerfellers try to match that!

MISCELLANY: Kitty #2 grew up, graduated Riverdale and IU, and became a dominant force on the DeKalb Central School Board. She will never lose the dramatic flare she so charmingly displayed on the "boards" at Old St. Joe.

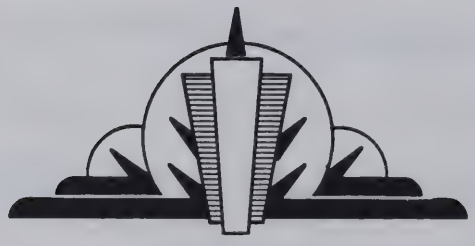
Father #2 became the most admirable politician I have ever met, and a fellow teacher.

Jack #3 became a teacher for a time, but then launched himself successfully in the business world.

The neurotic sister, Lorrain #3, "used" me (took my course in Spanish, largely to secure a role in the play) and then dumped the course immediately after the play was history.

Mother #3 was the best organized student I have ever seen and had the

extremely good taste to become a teacher of **exactly** the same subjects in which I had taught her! She was chosen the outstanding teacher of the Bloomington school system within a few years of her graduation from IU, 1964. And...could that girl do real justice on the piano to Leucona's "Malaguena"! Carramba!



HANK AND THE REMARKABLE SALVE

"There is a balm in Gilead

To heal the sick and wounded there,"

.....or so goes a lovely old Hymn of my scant acquaintance. It would have meant little to me in my life, me having little willing experience with religion...but for a medical oddity of my father's making. Father, like most farmers, was rather more inclined to look out for the health of his livestock than for his own, and the few remedies he knew were of the type to alarm conventional practitioners of medicine.

One of those remedies he DID use was Mrs. Corcoran's "Balm of Gilead" salve. The product closely resembled some of the herbal remedies featured in such works as the "Foxfire" series...an infusion of the buds of the celebrated Balm of Gilead tree (not by any means common to this area...or this country), mutton tallow...and likely other herbal sub-

. . . The product closely resembled some of the herbal remedies featured in such works as the "Foxfire" series. . .

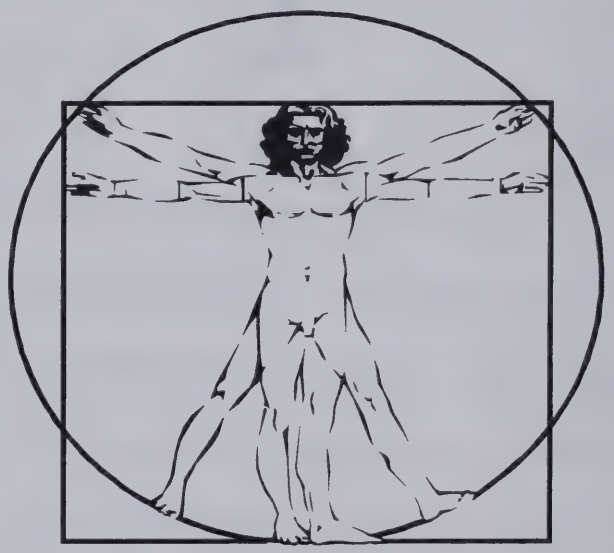
stances unknown to me. The end product was comfortably scented salve of tan color, (and when stored for years, ivory-like consistency!)

I knew of Father's use of the salve in the 1940's, but after his death in 1950, I hadn't

any idea where it might be again obtained. Mrs. Corcoran seemed to live somewhere near Auburn Junction, father had indicated...but where? No great moment at the time of his passing, for he had left a small supply, and you didn't use much at a time, anyhow.

The 50's and 60's passed, and the supply was gradually used up. In the 1970's, I enjoyed the pleasant acquaintance of Hank and Luetta Carper of Norland Park. Sometime after the death of Hank's remarkable mother, Minna Carper, I remarked upon Mrs. Corcoran's superior salve. Within a very brief time, Hank presented me with a 303 can of the precious nard. It had been found, along with several others, in Mrs. Carper's cupboards after her death. Mrs. Carper apparently had also had the formula and the skill necessary to produce it. It was a gift of CONSIDERABLE value to me!

The 70's passed; the 80's passed; the 90's were half over when I met Hank's son, Dennis. Hank and I had, though completely amicable, nonetheless drifted away from each other. I chatted briefly with Dennis, honestly complimented his father, and suggested that he mention to Hank that IF Hank had anymore of the salve, I'd be rather interested in it. (My



supply was nearly gone by now.!

A few nights later, a pleasant phone call: "Was I going to be home for a while?" For a fact, "Yes," but I'd gladly have changed any plans...and I really wasn't thinking of the salve at the moment. When Hank arrived, he presented me with another 303 can of salve, **fully 20 and perhaps 30 or 40 years old!**

Friends! That stuff has shelf life, for it was of the 1970's stock, at least. (I did find, after a couple of decades, that it tends to sort-of dry out. My single contribution to its effective use was to "nuke" it to a mahogany liquid in my microwave, and then to mix in enough mineral oil to make it again spreadable.)

I have now...without fear of contradiction...a LIFETIME SUPPLY of Balm of Gilead salve.

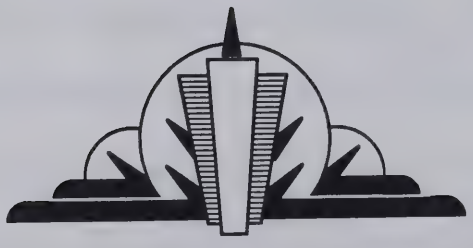
Do I hear a voice of cynical asperity, asking "What's all the fuss about?" Well, now, Bunky, there is also a doctor of medicine in Auburn, a Doctor of Fearsome Reputation, who also places such a store in Mrs. Corcoran/Minna Carper's salve. He has gone so far as to track down the original formula and attempt to brew the product himself. (It is reputed to be impossible to get the supplies domestically...even for a doctor. But, he thinks enough of it to have tried it!

"Well, then, just what does it do?" "Well, with that much sheep's tallow in it, it is very, very high in lanolin content, you know, it is superior for softening calluses...for starters. It is regarded as superior in drawing power. It is soothing for irritated or inflamed surface areas." And, like the man said, it has a pleasant herbal scent to it, also.

Add to that: you'd be surprised how effective a skim of it on the palms and rubbed into the newly laundered hair is as a dressing! I have used Squibb toilet lanolin as a hair dressing, and it doesn't work any better!

In the face of technological hauteur (I'll wait while you figure that one out!), I'm cautious about claiming too many benefits, lest I sound like a medicine show spieler. But, my father liked it; Minna Carper liked it; friend Hank likes it; the doctor likes it; Hubert likes it also. But.....but.....Hubert will **NOT** share his supply with anyone! For…

"There is a balm in Balm of Gilead salve,
That soothes with a touch of ancient care.
And "Yes", that Balm of Gilead salve,
Looks good on old gray hair!"
So there!



ON BEING A THOROUGHLY ROTTEN CADDY

It's one of those "God,-but I-hate-Indiana-weather" days, and to survive, I sink deeper into my recliner, turn up the heating pad another notch, and tune my television to the Pebble Beach or Los Angeles Open or Phoenix Open golf tournaments. And then, presently, I begin to wonder, "Is THAT really the sport that I labored in so many years ago, as the World's Worst Caddy?" "They are playing for obscene amounts of money; I "perfected" my wretched art at 30 cents for nine holes (and was probably lucky to get that!).

The places a kid could get any money in the '30's were rather limited. Allowances? Only the kids on North Main had those. Collect junk for sale to Lonergan's on 2nd Street? It took an unbelievable mass of newspapers, usually delivered on a coaster wagon, to earn a few pennies. Mow lawns? Do household chores? (The near-terminal thrill of having a wooden ladder break UNDER me [while washing Bill Roeder's second story windows] cured me of the latter.) So, like my brother before me, I entered the ranks of the caddie...and I was rank and ranked.

> . . . What was it, you may wonder, that distinguished me in my miserable performance? . . .

Beginning caddies give definitive definition to "low man on the totem pole". As a beginner, you were put to the test not very often, and then, usually, you really were "put to the test". Older, experienced caddies knew the walking lemons and knew how to avoid them. Let one of the "Classic-City Cheapies" but pull into the parking lot, and your master caddies evaporated. They would invisibly

await the plums---Charlie Welch, Bob South, or the Messenger ladies. Greenie-you got Herb Nigg or Art Paulsen or, (perish the thought!), the Hicksville Armada, really somewhat akin to the Oklahoma land rush or the Plagues of Egypt, but with golf clubs in hand!...Or, if it were a tourney and your brother (now a quality golfer) wanted to economize, your brother. Their particular evils, respectively: didn't tip and played badly, didn't tip and was a mean SOB, didn't tip and left you to take ALL of the pins for a seven-some; (All was not lost in the last two cases: I'd never have seen the Bryan Country Club without Broher.)

What was it, you may wonder, that distinguished me in my miserable performance? Well, I occasionally experienced a memory loss when it came to being quiet. By '38 and '39 and '40, I was becoming a chunky little wonder that could do marvelous things to a ball track on the green when I was taking a pin. My eyesight seemed normal, but following the flight of the ball, especially into the rough or the woods--just wasn't my forte. I didn't have the panache of "Pinkie" Honness; or the mature attraction of Wilbur Seigel. I

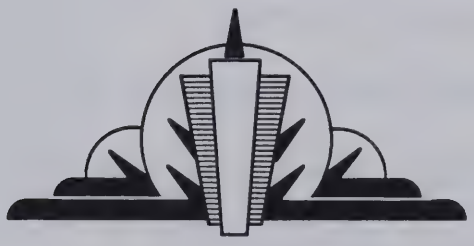
had no cute nickname like the "Friday"/"Saturday"/"Sunday" Treeshes. I could keep score, but there are SOME golfers who don't really relish accuracy in this department. I washed golf balls pretty well. I never had either the nerve or the aim to "stomp" a "lost" ball (to be retrieved later). I just whispered and clanked and sweated and lurched about my infrequently demanded duties. Now I wonder, could I have been the first "generic" caddie?

Whatever it was, I caddied from '37 to '41. I made a little pocket change. I learned some of the ropes of life from the lurid tales of the older caddies. Once, I had an absolutely profound discussion with Alice Messenger about 'How to eat a lobster',---surely the height of presumption on my part and surely a source of amusement to her. I did certainly learn that wealth and generosity were not common companions among wealthy golfers of Auburn Country Club. I learned that the game could instill such passion in its devotees that nothing...not laughter...not even risking six weeks in traction...could deter them from their "appointed rounds". (consult someone who has seen O. J. Sharpe teeing off!) (Also, see a picture of my brother fishing a ball from the creek in a remarkable three-point stance.)

Did the game ever rub off on me? Not much, no. I did play enough on "caddie days" to learn that with just a little more abandon, I could have "sliced" in a complete circle.

When I left caddying, I was yet associated with the game for two years...summers of '42 and '46, as a groundskeeping employee. I worked for Wigg Cler in '42 and for Louie Gibford in '46. In the winter of '46, I ballooned to 295 pounds, effectively ending my greenskeeping career. (Give a thought to having a 295 pounder walking in your putting line!) As a memento of the latter assignment,

I took away an injured sacroiliac that hounded me for 20 years thereafter. Perhaps, considering my contribution to golf, it was only justice. But, I do understand the pleasure of a sport played amid 135 acres of manicured greens, tees, and fairways. The fresh air, the sunshine, and the chance to impress your fellow golfers with your wardrobe, your equipment, your duck hook!



A MOMENT OF MARTHA

Martha Falka was the stuff that small-town legends may be made of: warm hearted, colorful, at once both generous and frugal...of mixed elements! As the local distaste for the memories of Auburn Auto and its untimely closing abated (and were replaced by nostalgia and profit), those who had worked there came to be honored for their achievements, among them, Martha. Yet, a present day survivor of the office force, perhaps a bit envious at Martha's late-found prominence, cattily observed that Martha never held more position than office girl and mail distributor...and claims that she didn't get the mail right sometimes, either!

Well, those of us who knew Martha didn't worry any more about her intellectual attainments (than we hoped she would worry about ours!) I knew her as a voracious reader and a rewarding conversationalist. She could talk...she WOULD talk on a variety of subjects. She was accommodating to her listener. What THEY wanted to talk about, she would attempt. Once in a while, you suspected that she was molding her opinions to make you

. . . As she became a legend, she stirred generous impulses in those who knew her . . .

comfortable; but hey now! What do we like any better than someone who will agree with us?

Example: the First Mate and the Green Beans. Of a summer's evening, the First Mate stopped by for a bag of Martha's best. Conversation yielded the fact that he had just come from his garden, where he had been picking green beans. No guile, no evil intent on Martha's part...she immediately remarked, "Oh, I don't know HOW long it's been since I had a good mess of green beans!" No comment by the First Mate, but within the hour, he had returned with a shopping bag, well-filled with green beans. Profuse thanks from Martha. But, after he had departed, (warmed no doubt by her response), she turned and remarked to a friend, "I don't know what I will do with them. I DON'T EVEN **LIKE** GREEN BEANS!" Deceitful? No, she was just making idle conversation, and likely making her listener feel good in the exchange! Martha.

Martha and the beer. As she became a legend, she stirred generous impulses in those who knew her. The collection of fine friends who so often and so willingly aided her...and enabled her to continue her popcorn operation, they are a lovely story in themselves. So too, the bar patrons of the 4 Crowns, who often sent Martha a libation to enliven a summer's evening. Practical Martha, she soon gave instruction to the bar personnel that beers were to be sent unopened. Thus, the beers could be shelved, saved, and consumed during the long winter. Practical, for she could operate her popper and cash drawer free of alcoholic influence. Sadly, I am told that beer, once refrigerated and then brought back to ambient temperature, is NOT "fit fer man nor beast!" Didn't seem to bother Martha!

But the mixed drinks sent over to her on the biggest night of her year, the Friday Night Classic Car Gabfest on West 9th Street?

There was no storing of those drinks; they MUST be drunk...and after a while, so was Martha, nearly. Fortunately, some of her trusted lieutenants were on hand to help her through the crush of business. Usually, she

was meticulous in her cash box operation, but on one occasion, she finally admitted defeat, threw all the bills and coin into the box, willy-nilly, and said the equivalent of, "What the heck!"

And, how we missed her when she was gone! One local wag, probably camouflaging their anticipated loss, suggested that when she DID pass on, the services of a taxidermist should be used, that the Museum's display of her celebrated bench have an unmatchable touch of authenticity! Another friend gave her perhaps a more suitable tribute when they went to Farmer's Market last year, purchased a massive quantity of fall flowers, went to the cemetery (and supposedly shinnied over a fence from the Auburn Gear parking lot), located her resting place, and held a long conversation...if a bit one-sided...with her.

Her popcorn stand remains open, an example of her planning and generosity. Her recipe for caramel corn (which SHE purchased from Berneice Wible) and oil-boiled peanuts are to be found in a recently published cookbook. Her bench is here in the Museum,...And, her memory lives on in the hearts and minds of her friends. You don't really do a lot better than that, now do you?

FURTHER ASPECTS OF RESTAURANTEURING AT 126 W. 8TH STREET

I was personally satisfied with my mother's starting a restaurant at 126 West 8th Street, Auburn...thereafter known as "The City Cafe" or just, Mrs. Stackhouse's. I was thirteen; I was hungry.

Mother had a touch of practicality, and such of her children as were still available and/or malleable were put into service. Sister Betty was work brickle, as the term is given. She made a fine waitress, and additionally plied domestic skills at home. I was somewhat less "brickle", but my meager skills could be applied to some lowly restaurant chores. To wit:

Vermin control. We had mice...no way that you could long keep them out. Trapping was the answer and I ran a "trap line", mostly in the basement. I was placed on an incentive system...5 cents per mouse corpse, shown to Mother. Sadly, honesty was not my long suit, and this incentive died when Mother realized that I was selling the same mouse to her repeatedly. I haven't the clearest memory of it, now some 55+ years later, but I would guess that I probably had to immolate them in the fires of the coal cook stove, in her pres-

. . .Mother would buy her birds on the hoof . . .

ence, thereafter.

Floor mopping. Surely God hates custodians! Why else would "battleship linoleum" have been invented? It NEVER looked attractive, even when freshly mopped and waxed. Getting it to a highly waxed sheen was a chore...a bonafide chore! It fell my lot to do just that each Friday night, usually after 9 PM, or so. It must be mopped with hot, sudsy water...sudsy with Mother's home-made soap (heavy on the lye!). It must thereafter be rinsed with cold water, removing any residue and allow it to dry. Apply a substantial coat of liquid wax, wait for THAT to dry, and then return the furniture to its proper place...4 square tables and 16 chairs, exactly! (But, the kitchen was mopped daily by the dishwasher, and at least I didn't have to do that.) Time hung heavy on one's hands, waiting for drying...or just taking a breather. One could entertain oneself by making Olympic-quality malted milkshakes! Heavy on the ice cream (Puritan, and ambrosia at that!), heavy on the chocolate (and damn the zits!), heavy on the alt, and a modicum of milk. If it approached "setting-up" in the metal Hamilton Beach "cup", it was just about right.

Added to the access I had to Mother's other cooking, it will surprise none that my weight would balloon from 185 in September to 235 by the following May (Summer would bring more exercise, causing the weight to subside.)

The Front Window. Mother did NOT like domestic work, possibly the result of

being forced to it when my parents bankrupted at farming and came into town in November of 1924. But...**but...BUT...** she did demand exquisite performance of others in performing those same chores for her. The front window of the City Cafe was a case in point. As you look at it now, there on the front of the Madden-Widner Insurance agency, you see barely more than half of its original expanse. Taken altogether, it took SOME washing. And, according to sacred formula. One must use hot water and vinegar (once or twice, I do remember trying it with ammonia), brush, squeegee, and chamois. You must reach every corner with the vinegar water, usually including down the pole and up your arm!) Then, it must be squeegee-ed in careful, overlapping strokes, the squeegee being wiped dry after every stroke. When totally squeegee-ed, then wipe around every edge with the chamois to remove any possible water streaks along the edge. THEN, **INSPECT IT CAREFULLY** (before she could). And, then, "Tomorrow is another day...for window washing." And, there were two or three side windows, giving out on the back brick wall of the hardware, that could/should/must be washed from time to time. We needed a nice clear view of the bricks, I suppose (and I don't feel any better about it at 71 than I did at 13-14-15.)

And, finally, "The Fridge" and the "Slaughter Yard". An outside stairway to the basement could be found in the mini-courtyard between the restaurant and the Auburn Printing Company. It didn't go to waste, no siree! Refrigeration was limited to the ice cream chest and a large, double-door fridge. More than that was needed, particularly for very large vessels..the chili and the mincemeat canners. Fortunately, both of these delicacies were cold-weather items. Mother would make a 20-quart enamel canner of chili soup

(Mother's chili was not the thick, gummy gruel common now.) It WAS a soup of superior ingredients and talent, with a spicy, full-flavored broth atop it! But, it required refrigeration when "brewed", inasmuch as Mother would never have used enough spices in it to anaesthetize bacteria. So, where to refrigerate something that large?...and Mother had a superior recipe for "20-quart mincement" that was exercised, sometimes several times in a winter. No bacteria could have stood the vinegar, spies, apple jelly...a totally acidic environment...in the final product, but it seemed to require refrigeration also.

Well, now...at that outside cellarway, there was a ledge on each side of perhaps 18"...and all enclosed in a shed-like cover with a lockable outside door. You got it, Bunky! From November through March, whenever needed, I could be sent with a knife, large spoon, and dipper to the "storage". Usually, the chili or mincement were frozen into a loose slush. If firmer, take the knife and cut off a chunk, dipper it, and bring it back into the kitchen. (Some simpleton will surely wonder if I put both of them in the dipper at the same time! "No, Clem, (as in Clem Kadiddlehopper, Charlie McCarthy's ox-brained fellow dummy), I didn't!"

But, by far the most spectacular, and

most likely to catch the attention of the Board of Health...the slaughter yard. Chickens, as any history buff can tell you, were often slaughtered, plucked, and drawn at home. Mother would buy her birds on the hoof, and I was their means to eternity. On the west side of the

aforementioned cellar way were three or four thin, galvanized metal "conical cylinders" (Donald Coar, be proud of your old geometry student!) [That's a cone with its narrow tip cut off!] Taking a doomed chicken by its feet and wing-tips, it was thrust down into the cone. Its head was pulled through the narrow opening, and swiftly severed by a butcher knife. The cone restrained the spasmodic heavings of the decapitated bird, and it "bled-out" rather well. It was, for a fact, faster to do than to tell you of it.

A Saturday evening **25 cent chicken supper** required perhaps 3 or 4 chickens (at two pieces per customer). The Sunday **50 cents deluxe dinner** would require 4 or 5 more birds be dispatched to the Great Poultry yard in the Sky.

Once the slaughter was completed, buckets of boiling water were brought from the kitchen, corpses were dipped, and then (on sheets of newspaper), feathers were removed. There was a modicum of technique required here. Water too hot, or bird immersed too long...the delicate skin might tear, particularly on the wings. And, in early summer when the molting season was upon us, removal of the pin feathers was an exacting job, particularly with darker-feather chickens like the Plymouth rocks (I don't now remember too much variety in the breeds of chickens involved. I'd like to name drop some of the Buff Orpingtons or the Aura-canians or the Dominickers, but I doubt that I ever saw any of these. There were just white and reddish-brown and gray-black chickens.

And then, I tidied up the feathers, disposed of the heads (They had a kind of vacant look about them. But then...even when a chicken is alive, it is mentally pretty vacant!) I took the carcasses into the kitchen, and began the drawing process. First, each bird was held over the open flame in the coal cook stove to singe off the hairs **(And YES, chickens do have a sort of hair in there with all those**

feathers!). Then, wash them carefully in cold water and begin inspecting them for pinfeathers. There IS something satisfying about a perfectly plucked and prepared chicken, and I ENJOYED it even then! Next, open the body cavity,

remove the viscera, and OH SO CAREFULLY cut the gall bladder away from the liver. Open and clean out the contents of the gizzard (stomach). Locate and save the heart. Discard all else, and seal it up pretty good, too. (Chicken innards spoil easily and smell grandly!) Finish by cutting the birds into serving pieces, usually eight good pieces..two each of drumsticks, thighs, wings, and generous breast servings. The remaining backs were divided into two and used as 1/2 of the Saturday Night 25 cent chicken special. Livers? Save them for Homer Gossett, the Western Union Manager, who came in every 5th or 6th Saturday night for sautéed chicken livers. Gizzards, hearts? They were cooked along with the rest of the chicken, but I don't remember them ever being requested or served. Some of he chicken, probably the throw-away backs and necks, were used to make a fine chicken noodle or chicken rice soup that went with the Sunday dinner.

And, once in a while, Mama obtained an ancient, super-tough barnyard tyrant...an old rooster. All the usual treatment, up to cooking. To cook, boil the old duffer for hours...he must fall from the bone. Carefully pick the meat over, pack it in a loaf pan, and boil down the broth. It was laden with natural gelatin, and poured over the picked-off chicken and chilled, made a **superior** chicken loaf for sandwiches.

Mama lived before the age of broasting, and she would have disdained French frying anything but potatoes. No. Her method of cooking was to dredge the chicken in flour, brown it in butter/shortening, and "steam" it done in a covered roaster. If the chicken was tough (a bit elderly at its time of passing?), she was known to interlace it with 8 or 10 very large, very clean iron spike nails. They conducted the heat quite well, and the end product came out tender **and** flavorsome, owing to its maturity.

"What would the Board of Health have said about my slaughter yard...our fridge?"

Today, gasps of horror. Then, they so much enjoyed the end product, accompanied by Mama's pies and tender biscuits and the like, that they would likely have clucked their tongues (appropriate for chicken dinners?) and looked the other way. For a fact, only one person never became sick from a meal of the City Cafe, and he...sheer gluttony. (A young man, working on the installation of the sewage disposal plant in the late 30's, was treated by his father to a glorious birthday dinner: **a 3-pound Porterhouse, French fries, and a whole strawberry pie w/ whipped cream topping!)** The poor kid DID nearly die of his overeating, but it wasn't Mama who nearly killed the kid with birthday kindness.

Times have changed some since then. Madden does not slaughter chickens behind his place of business. Chickens are delivered now totally cleaned and cut into impossible portions (not by hand-knife, but by a frightening cousin to the circular saw). Parts we once disdained have been raised to "cuisine" by being "Buffalo-ed", or "rumaki-ed". And, Frustrated Gourmets of the World, try finding a chicken that is a lovely "noodle-yellow" for having had genuine barnyard dirt under its feet. If you know someone who raises chickens thusly, **CULTIVATE THEM!**

THE GOOD MEN GET TOGETHER

In 1917 and in Chicago, a group of inspired businessmen paused one day...one presumes at a luncheon...to observe that talents such as theirs could serve humankind better if they united in an organization...which they chose to call the Lions Club. It was the proverbial idea whose time has come, but NOT come and gone. It is, I'm happy to say, here to stay.

Within ten years, it had spread rather widely through the Midwest and Plains States, including Ft. Wayne and Garrett.

Eyeing prospective spots for extension, their eyes fell on Auburn. A delegation of Garrett Lions, with the aid of International Rep. George Bormuth of Fort Wayne Central Lions Club, began talking with Herman Brown, a local insurance agent, and then other business and professional leaders. Within a relatively short period of time, 28 of them agreed to accept the Charter and the challenge of serving Auburn. On a very warm June night (the 4th, of 1928), they met in the K of P Lodge Rooms (2nd floor, Waterbed Heaven) for their Charter Meeting. Their president was, rather naturally, Herman Brown; his son, Bernard, was secretary; and local banker

...They were mandated by their charter and affiliation to SERVE...

Harry Casebeer served as treasurer. The membership was an excellent mixture of business and professional men: a doctor (Nugen), a dentist (Graham), a lawyer (Endicott), school men (Zeigler, Young), insurance (Brown, Gonser and West), plumbing and heating (Lige, Weaver..and Widney), autos (Holben), media (Nicolai)...and a duke's mixture of other professions.

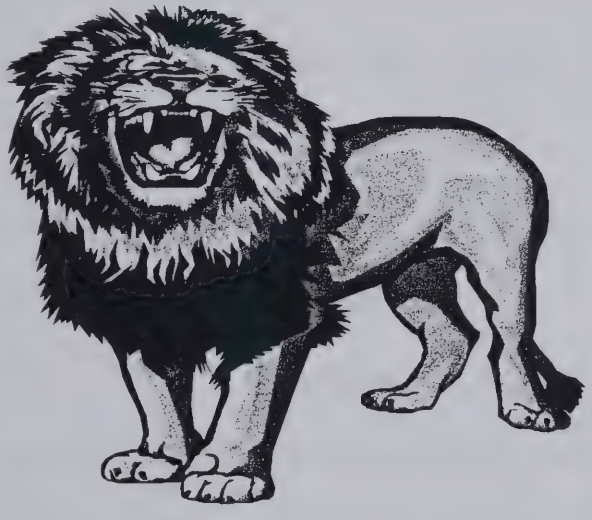
What was so different about THIS group? Well...they were not simply a "meet-to-eat" or "meals-for-deals" club. They were mandated by their charter and affiliation to SERVE. (There was a respectable body of opinion in the community that would have doubted the need for such service, but the Lions soon proved them wrong.)

Perhaps the first noticeable benefit conferred by the Auburn Lions was not to Auburn, but to Waterloo. The Lions enjoyed their movement, and rather quickly extended it to Waterloo, which was chartered in 1929. (Thereafter, but not immediately, they would render similar service to Butler, St. Joe, Corunna, Cedar Creek [Leo], Huntertown, Bryan [Ohio], Land-of-Lakes [Steuben County lake district]...and although local records do not confirm it, Angola recently asserted that Auburn was also their "daddy".)

What really put the Lions on the map, locally? The rickety bridges at 7th and 9th Streets on Cedar Creek needed replacement, and the Lions focused local attention and pressure on the County Commissioners...pressure that resulted in new bridges. Then, a popular young husband in Auburn was killed at the West 7th Street New York Central crossing, and the Lions led the battle to force the railroad to erect crossing warning lights and crossing gates. Toward the end of the 30's, Lions also used their muscle power to the first of a pair of clean-up projects on the old cemeteries on South Union Street. Note: little funding was involved. The 30's were

lean times, and even with the development of the car raffle project in the late 30's, funds were still limited.

By the late 40's, funding prowess had improved. The Horse Show of 1946 was an earning revelation; post-war car raffles bore remarkable returns that underwrote the signal project of all Auburn Lion history--the Little



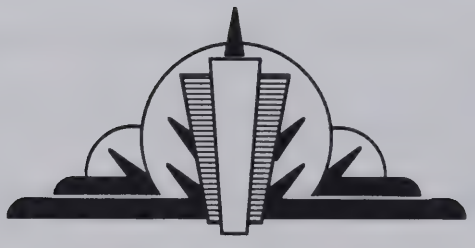
League Park on Union Street.

The "steering committee" of the Little League project was blue ribbon, and then some. For starters, it had TWO mayors (Hoham and Oren), city councilmen, and other community leaders, all Lions. No exact figure can be found for its construction and subsequent improvements, but knowledgeable observers have estimated it at $25,000, AND LABOR! A city dump site, on land owned and thence contributed by the Thomas family, was converted into the premier facility of its type in Northern Indiana.

As of this writing, that Club is now into its 69th year. In that time, total funds raised and spent on local or state Lions projects probably exceed $300,000...not to mention the tens of thousands of hours of Lion labor. Some of the largest recipients of Lions funds would have to include more than $30,000 in scholarship grants, more than $15,000 in Youth Exchange trips, an average of more than $10,000 **EACH** to Leader Dogs for the Blind, Indiana Lions Eye Bank, Indiana Lions Cancer Control, Sight Conservation (probably double the given figure for eyeglasses for the needy). Lions Kidney Founda-

tion, Diabetes Awareness, and Puppy Program are similar, if less heavily funded projects. And, for each dollar and each hour of Lions time expended on the above projects, at least that much has also been expended on smaller-but-equally-deserving local projects, the greater part of which focus on the community's youth ...frequently administered through the schools.

And was every project a triumph? Hardly, but an honest 90% or better of them were. Some were quiet...unspectacular...but they served: painting parking meters, painting bike safety signs, cutting weeds in a cemetery, assembling a park pavilion and...whatever needed.



ON COLORFUL RELATIVES

As you've read my offerings, you've perhaps reached the conclusion that I had exotic...some might say "flaky"...relatives. I tend to think it not so; the same interesting (I hope) people run in all families; they just don't find the authors there that they deserve.

You've likely got an "Uncle Slick", enough of a wit to attract an amoral heiress for a wife, but not enough charm or intelligence to keep her from setting an Olympic record for infidelity (at least by Hicksville standards!)

Even his going out had these two elements about it. He had sued her for divorce (after decades of cuckoldery), changed the beneficiary on his insurance, and then relented (On the very day of the divorce hearing, she was forced to miss the funeral of her last paramour. Perhaps he sympathized with the strain she was under!) Well, sir, they ended his days together, but when the funeral expenses were to be paid, the new beneficiary at first refused to fork over the cash, and then made sure that the funeral and the headstone consumed the entire $1,000! He'd've laughed!

...the same interesting (I hope) people run in all families...

The possibly-grieving widow may or may not have appreciated her opponent get-

ting in a final, like there. They had been sisters-in-law, and with no love lost. The widow had often fomented trouble within the family by such acts as encouraging my mother, a young bride at the time, to "Get into the kitchen quickly, Hazel, before she does!" The opponent wasn't the fine cook Mother was, and she resented the obvious slight paid her.

She herself was not much of a cook. Her husband was chosen by our grandmother to run the farm after Grandfather Stackhouse died in 1918, thereby denying my father an assured job and living. Salt in the wound? Grandmother Stackhouse let Uncle Slick purchase Grandfather's Ford. A bit of irony I observe now, almost 80 years later, the farm went under, the Ford wore out, and Grandma missed all of the good cooking she's have had at my mother's hand!

Uncle Slick spent the rest of his life as a sort of ribbon-clerk in a Hicksville hardware; the wife slowly consumed the several parcels of real estate that were her legacy and ran innumerable little crossroads groceries, the better to ply her romantic wiles, I suppose. And...when she came at last to die, she was living in a grossly unkempt mobile home on one of her few remaining lots with lots and lots of daintiness-challenged cats! The odor was s-t-u-l-t-i-f-y-i-n-g, and thassa' fact! Once is all we visited her in those circumstances, and we sat MOST warily...we did!

And then there was Uncle George.

Fate owed Uncle George more than he got out of life, but being the gentle man that he was, you'd never have heard him complain. He was born in rural Noble County, educated in the Ligonier schools, taught briefly thereafter, and went off to serve in the Spanish-American War. He married his beloved "Billie", my Aunt Winnifred. She had been

bitterly disappointed in her first marriage, likely intended to avoid matrimony thereafter, and only married again of her intense desire to have children of her own. She was perceptive enough to recognize the fine character and loving nature packaged in such a homely package as uncle George. A good choice.

But, no children graced their marriage, and they lavished their affection on their 10 nieces and nephews, me among 'em. Aunt Winnie did remark late in her life that had she known that she could not have children, she would never have re-married...an uncharacteristically flinty comment for her. They vacationed much and excitingly, it seemed to me, in such places as Petosky, Mich., Wisconsin, the Soo...with George's sister, Ollie and her husband, Enos Johnson of Goshen. And, they saved their money to build their dream home.

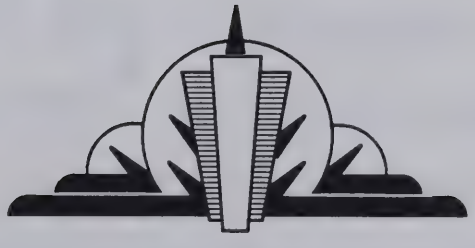
If Fate had made their marriage barren, it laid the second blow on them when it allowed the Depression and Crash to wipe out their savings...$15,000!!, which would have built their new home. When all of the dust had settled, they realized only about 10 cents on the dollar. They were both near the end of their working careers, with no chance of recouping. They ended their days on Dale Avenue, near the Miami community in SE South Bend. Their home seemed fine to us, living in low rent "digs" as we did; it was NOT the home of their dreams. Aunt Winnie had

the fine Austrian "Versailles" pattern china she had bought against a finer home

prospect...good, solid furniture...fine linens (for she had been an employee of the Robertson Department Store in South Bend and had known and purchased quality).

Now, 47 years later, I can still hear his deep chuckle, smell his beloved pipes, hear him tell of his posting on Fernandina Island during the War, run my hands across his collection of wooden woodworking tools (He had been a cabinet maker for Singer Sewing Machine Plant in South Bend), and I can read his diploma from Ligonier High School (Academy) and read his child's autograph book:

"Forget thee? I'd as soon
Forget the dinner bell at noon,
And leave the turnips, meat and 'taters
To be devoured by hungry waiters!"



CHRISTMAS AS I KNEW IT

The Christmases I Never Had

'Tis Christmas Day, and I, the bachelor, sit in my "lonely" house, reinforcing the pathetic image of the "lonely bachelor". "Tis Christmas Day, and I'm going nowhere (pause for sympathetic sighs). **But, dear friends, it's of my own choice!**

I guess the pattern of my Christmases was established by my mother, as I was a wee bairn. Mother accepted a rather Draconian religious faith about 1930, and that faith forbid the celebration of traditional religious holidays. Father was a good man, but rather casual about religion, so Mother called the shots. (Oh, to be sure, she WAS a Christian...but recall, please, that the Pilgrims also celebrated ONLY Easter, and would have severely punished anyone making merry on Christ's birthday.) One can be a devout Christian without "Rudolph & Company". It's just a lot more fun that way, I guess!

Well, anyhow, as a result, Christmases weren't the same for us as for others. The rest of the world...even in that happy, less-commercial era...swung into a Christmas mood when the snows began to fall. There

. . .I guess the pattern of my Christmases was established by my mother. . .

wasn't the orgy of advertising and "Mall-ing" then, but we knew **IT** was coming anyhow. School and church pageants would be in preparation, with the same dreadful results (I am totally intolerant of juvenile lisping and "cutsey-poo" children's programs! So there!). Some construction paper or colored hecto-graph paper atrocities would be taped up to the classroom windows. Eventually, there would be some sort of all-school program. (See Opus #3 and my number on Principal Della McGinnis teaching us "dic-tion" during the Harrison School Christmas caroling-around-the-tree.) Dismissal for a LOVELY, **TWO-WEEK** Christmas Vacation would follow!

In the two week period preceding the Holiday, one or two presents (from sturdy souls who disdained Mother's Puritanical point of view) would arrive...usually from beloved Aunt Winnifred; and once, in person, from Grandmother Rachel Stackhouse. Aunt Winnie's presents could be classified by the "Dylan Thomas, A Child's Christmas in Wales" method. "Presents were either clothing (dull) or useful (TOYS!)" Aunt Winnie, one of the single loveliest souls in God's Creation, sadly elected for things wooly and scratchy. (There is an eternal verity: the closer a garment is worn to a sensitive area [the neck, for example], the scratchier it will be! Sweaters were bad; scarves were a terror. Woolen underwear...I never received any, but I **SHUDDER AT THE VERY THOUGHT!**)

Grandma Stackhouse's visit...and present? A measly, insignificant handkerchief...or so I viewed it then. But, as I aged and thought, I realized that Grandmother Stackhouse was living off the meager remnants of the sale of her small farm...that she had 13 grandchildren in one family, 9 in a second family, and 4 in our family...**and that it is the love that makes the gift and the Season, not the money!** Twenty-six grandchildren (and

four children and mates), and you have a very considerable expense. Just a 25 cent hankie for each of them and you are in for a lot...and in the depths of the Depression. Honestly, I cringe **now** at my attitude/feelings then; but sadly, she is in her grave some 60 years now and can never hear my tardy "Thank you, Grandma".

Was Father totally cowed by Mother's draconian Christmas? Not quite, no...She would have bent to the point of allowing a **couple** of chickens for the dinner. Then, amazingly, Father would come home with a TURKEY...an embarrassment of riches...and some navel oranges (They were a Holiday-only item then.) And, we would feast. (No, Mother did NOT make such a special effort, but with her cooking skills...common meals might have been regarded by others as a feast.) Her natural skills contravened her religious inclinations, in this case!

Christmas morning, or sometime during the day, I must "over" to a nearby friend's to inspect his Christmas swag. His parents were not as intense...or skilled...in parenting as mine; but Christmas presents they splurged on! A Daisy air rifle...sure! A new bicycle...sure! Clothes? Now really.....! They understood childish desires, and "present-ed" accordingly. (But, I think that if I had been able to invite them to dinner at the Stackhouse's, they'd have met much, **much, MUCH** better cookin' than they'd ever get at home, surely the ultimate gift!)

And my friend, B. Y. Butler (living with parents and four brothers in the basement apartment at the Catholic Apartments up the block)? Likely a happy Christmas of much love, much Faith, and little money. They were Catholic...a faith that evoked extreme wariness from my mother...and so it would be sometime before I knew of their celebrations. That they went to Midnight Mass, I knew; what they did there...I had only Mother's negative speculations about this. They weren't "braggy" kids, so they didn't thrust their largesse at you. And anyhow, they all turned out so well as adults that you know they received the most cherished gift of all...a good raising.

By the time school rolled around again (after New Year's Day), most presents were forgotten. Oh, to be sure, the itches were eternal, they were! Oddly, no batteries had run down by then, 'cause nothing was battery-operated then! Not too many things were broken...none were plastic...a connection there? And, another Christmas began to fade on life's horizon (poetic flourish, there!)

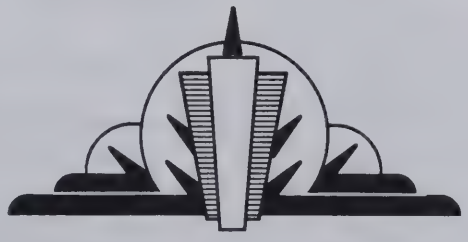
Father and Sister Betty swam against the tide of Mother's faith until 1943, and DID decorate a Christmas tree at 364 West 7th...but always to Mother's disdain. The two older children married; I went off to War; the tree custom died. The few, tatty ornaments were kept in the attic for a few years, and then discarded. By '46, none of the children were any longer at home, and Father didn't really care THAT much.

40+ years went by, and Mother died in '87. Each year I had heard the carols (albeit those from a West 7th Street church nearly drove me batty with their volume). I saw the acceleration of commercialism and gritted my teeth. Then, Cousin Freida, (a "crafty" one if ever there lived one) demonstrated a cute small tree compounded of the detritus of soci-

ety...coat hangers, masking tape, garland, and a string of wee lights. IT WORKED! We used **MY VERY OWN** coat hangers, with an appealing result. It is workable (doesn't dominate the room), practical (hooked up to my "clapper" switch), it is unexpected and merry, both, and it will be easily stored again for the third year.

"Do I feel disloyal to Mother?" Oh, come off it, now! She lived her life much as she wished...at least in later years. It's MY house, MY life, and MY Christmas now! Just keep the volume down on those "carols from the steeple"!

But, wait...does this all make Mother sound like a Heavy? Well, she DID accept some of Christmas as inevitable and "bow" to it. When her children persisted in giving her Christmas presents, she didn't "swim upstream". She came to quietly accept them. Hypocrisy? Hey, you don't know my Mama! Likely she thought of it as an Auxiliary Mother's Day! So there!



TAKING MAMA TO DINNER

In the recent past, I assayed a cookbook, in which I put every memorable recipe that I could rememb-le (Notice that flashing wit?) In my hurry to get my contribution done (It was to have been an equal collaboration), I overlooked an area that at one time had gained me a (very) limited renown...the restaurant review. (In fact, a "lady" dropped me from the list of her friends for several years because I could not/would not serve as an unpaid reviewer on a fledgling "Ft. Wayne" magazine she was mid-wife-ing. Truly, I hadn't the exquisite tastes and frou-frou expression necessary to be a good reviewer, but those facts were lost on the lady.)

But, I did know a little something about solid, ordinary, every-day foods and where to find them. And...they ARE solid,...but NOT SO ORDINARY or every-day as to make them a drug on the market. I came to categorize them as "meals-that-would-please-Mama"; and whenever my mother and I were afield antiquing or off to Aunt Winnifred's in South Bend, we'd seek out one of the few such places and dine. Mother died in '87, and no more mortal meals pleased Mama; but since then, a time or two I have

. . .Mother died in '87, and no more mortal meals pleased Mama. . .

found such Mama-meals, and I shall include them.

(Sorry, but it's not there anymore.) Walters Cafe in LaGrange, Indiana. Set in a tiny, chalet-like building at the junction of Indiana 9 and US 6, endowed with exactly 28 seats in the front two-thirds, an upstairs serving area and a full kitchen in the basement, remember this spot for its classic "chicken and biscuits" Saturday night supper. Chicken, boiled until rich and tender, picked carefully from the bone and kept hot and moist, one tremendous baking-powder biscuit, in halves; from-scratch mashed; beautiful clear-yellow chicken gravy, and assemble. Generous scoop of mashed in the middle of the oval platter (perfect round depression in it) flanked by biscuit halves. Over it all, ladle a generous serving of the picked-off chicken. Cover that with a generous coating of the gravy, and complete with a light accent of good paprika. Perfection on a platter!

And, everything they cooked had that same quality. Seared into my diet-stricken memory is their perfect baked apple, served in its skin, sitting on a small pool of it's own juices. The sauce was caramel; it cried out for a serving of cream with it. Sorry, no recipe. And...individual cinnamon-pecan rolls, baked

"upside down" and served with the "goo of the gods" dribbling down their sides. Recipe...forget it; save that the dough had a substantial, bread-dough texture/toughness to it.

At Walters, Mother ate with enjoyment and complimented them on their

food.....something that she did almost nowhere else in those days.

And, on Miami Avenue in East South Bend...Ciro's Hungarian Bakery and Restaurant. (No, we never ate there while Aunt Winnifred was alive, only two blocks away on Dale Avenue; but after she passed away in '62, we ate there several times during the settling-the-estate period.) For years afterward, I would drop in at Ciro's for a pre-game snack on a game day (but that didn't last for long, and neither did Notre Dame's attraction to me!) The significant memory? Ciro's breads, Ciro's sweet rolls, Ciro's stacked sandwiches with fresh-pack dill spears. Then, like so many good things, it mysteriously (to me) disappeared. A dill-pickle flavored memory, yes.

Any Auburn restaurants? Are you kidding!!! My mother? She DID envy, but **COULD OUT COOK** any of the local cooks. She knew and liked Dan and Bea Johnson of TeePee fame, but I never heard her laud their food. She knew of Jim Herzer and Roger Gordon of TeePee fame, but I doubt that she ever even tasted their viands...and at moments they were "Walters quality". In later years, I think that she conferred a recipe or two on Mayola Walters (no relation that I know), but I can't imagine that she ever sampled Mrs. Walters' cuisine. And Thimlar's, Herricks, Dad Shumans? Well, hey...she cooked there, and it would have been her own cooking she was endorsing (which she'd have been quite willing to do), but the premise of this article is "other people's" cooking).

I have to believe that she would have given her reluctant seal of approval to Yoder's of Hicksville, Bob's at Woodburn, the Waynewood (near Baer Field)...BUT NONE IN Garrett, Avilla, or Kendallville. To be sure, there are superior restaurants in these

last three, but we're in the age of French frying, and deep-fat cookery and that would NOT have pleased her. Meats...chicken or round steak, pan-browned and then roasted (tight lid and a little moisture) steamed tender...that was her style. And, the pan gravy was elixir!

Of the above, Yoder's and Bob's would

have made it on their pies, although Bob's does a good deal of deep-fat frying. She would have appreciated some of the Mennonite touch a la Gottfrieds of Garrett, but she never used sour cream in any recipe (But, hey...how much sour cream was there in cooking **in 1946** when she retired?...and I think that she looked for reflections of her own cooking techniques. No exciting foreign fripperies for her!)

How would she have fared with the Dutch Mill in Bluffton, or the Back 40 in Decatur? She'd have liked much of the former...especially the home-made pies. Of the latter, she'd not have understood the principle of the unlimited-quantity-but-limited-quality buffet. She prepared little that might be left to stand on a steam table for two or three hours. She served you what you needed; the Plagues of Egypt could eat elsewhere!

How would she have reacted to Auburn Diner food in later years. Not well, sadly. They were competitors, and she was **NOT** prepared to be magnanimous with the competition. She bore a grudging admiration for the management of the Temple Cafe...a fellow hard-working business WOMAN...but I never heard a compliment for the food (but then, I also doubt that she ever tasted Temple food after the late twenties when she cooked briefly for the celebrated

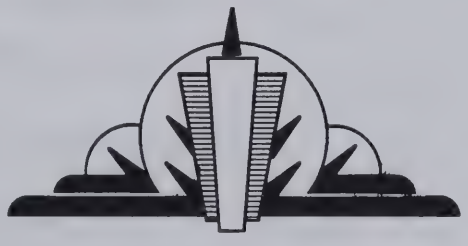
George Moore there.)

I am sorry that she cannot have tried out Peg Zehner's baked steak, the Railroad Inn's rhubarb pie, Vince's V & A Bread Pudding (Just fill my coffin with it when I die!), the St. James American fries with sautéed onions. And what a loss that she cannot have tried some of the truly great home recipes of some of my friends! But that's the other cookbook, isn't it?

Did she raise my tastes so high that they can never be satisfied? Oh, come now! I didn't get to be a svelte size 70 on "cuisine". Me for the greasy fried chicken, Hardee's preferably. Me for the cherry sundae, Azar's, if you please. Me for pizza, Pizza Hut preferred...or Oley's "foot-deep" pizza! Me for well-done prime rib, **ANYWHERE!** Me for Famous Fish of Stroh, basket full after basket full. Me for Sam's in Blakeslee and Dottie Vorndran's "magic-with-veggie-salad" at Town Tavern; and Shook's and some Hall's and...and...and. Oh, please understand, these are not anything but good restaurants, but **they do serve a lot of HIGH CAL, MUCHO FATTENING stuff,** and until recently I stood on overstrained arches to testify to it! Mama would not have approved of much of it, and my beloathed 1,000 calorie diet no longer allows it. But, I have my memories and still an excess of 125 pounds above the "ideal" weight. I will, in short, never completely return to those "viands", but I have loved, do love 'em anyhow! Like de song say, "I don't care what Mama doan "low, I goan eat that fried food anyhow...beginning about February of 1997!"

Footnote for a calorie-dodging smart aleck: "What about the original Hall's on South Fairfield?" "Well, yes, Mama did eat there a time or two (because she knew a waitress, one June Pomeroy, and she DID like the prime rib"....."and Mrs. Aiken's Tea Room in St. Joe, c. 1940"....."and Marvel's Cafe at the Dana?" "Well, it was 'ready, and plenty, and piping hot', and it did serve working men, whom Mother preferred as customers, and

it pleased the Lions for **27 YEARS,** but a local cook...NOT!"....."and Grace Krick's stint at the Auburn Rubber/Cooper Tire dining facility?"..."Local competition again!"....."and the local church's mince-ment?"..."Well, Mama regularly received a call from her beauty parlor operator, asking her to doctor the insipid recipe. [I understand they later came by a more laudable formula.] She would never have made **that** meatless wonder they turned out at the outset!"



SO...HUMOR ME PLEASE

"But, you're so witty!", she said, further inflating my ego. I've heard this compliment a time or two; and in the wee, small hours of the night (when I have done a lot of my best [?] thinking,) it occurred to me that maybe...just maybe...I had something to offer on this subject. (Of the foregoing sentence, you will have to admit it would be a 'Lulu' to diagram, and it demonstrates pure chutzpah in its use of brackets and parentheses! Yeah!)

Well, anyhow...if I do have some skill as a humorist, what is it that I can do? I guess, like the celebrated baseball player, I can "hit 'em where they ain't". For, in a nutshell (suitable receptacle for humorists), humor consists of leading the listener/reader/viewer toward a logical conclusion, and then-not delivering the expected result.

It's: Asking them to add 2 + 2, then not letting the result be 4. (This, of course, poses a real danger to the humorist in our Age of Litigation: that an attorney will haul your derriere into court and prove to a jury, expensively, that his client suffered irreparable damage when the answer turned out to be either 3 or 5. (Purdue graduates [a contradiction of

. . .Every bit of humor we were likely to hear was but a variation of one of those four jokes. . .

terms, if ever I heard one] will not see any humor in the foregoing example. 3 and 5 are familiar answers to them!)

A long, long time ago (before 1990, for youngsters [actually the fall of 1949]), I had the pleasure of hearing (and copying all the 'punch lines' of) R. Nelson Snider, celebrated humorist and Principal of South Side High School in Fort Wayne. He began his famous lecture, "The Anatomy of Humor", with a funny reference to the fee he was being paid for the talk. Considering the parsimony of the Lagrange County Superintendent who had "booked" him, even thinking of a generous fee was some funny! He regaled the audience with humorous examples of his four types of humor, and the point he so entertainingly made was: (ho, ho!) There were only four jokes. Four, mind you! Every bit of humor we were likely to hear was but a variation of one of those four jokes. O, how carefully I copied down his points...his punch lines. O, how careless I've been these 45 years to have lost them! But...I do remember some of his dicta. **"Never tell religious jokes...unless you carefully include every religion in the room in your jokes." (It is not being "made fun of" that offends, as much as being left out!)**...and..."**A joke DOES ***NOT***have to be mean, insulting, or painful to be funny."** (Sort of illuminates the psyche of someone who can tell only ethnic, racist, or biological jokes.) Oh, to be sure, I enjoy that kind of joke also, **But,** they're not my stock in trade, and you rarely hear me repeating one of them. (Hypocritical...maybe so!) **And, for God's sake, "REMEMBER YOUR PUNCH LINES!"** (The speech of the single greatest impact in my life was delivered by a Lt. Governor of Oklahoma, some 40 years ago, when he appeared to forget four consecutive punch lines before a very large after-dinner audience. He labored on through his speech, seemed to

be surviving barely, but at the end returned to the same jokes; and this time, **he hit those punch lines like a ton of bricks.** The audience was in ecstasy (not a real feat, considering the amount of FREE California wine we had imbibed during the dinner!), for not only were the jokes funny and stunningly appropriate to his subject, but further, he had played a joke on US by leading us to feel SO sorry for the poor floundering speaker.

Gift to the reader: the four punch lines.....

1. "Oh sure, he was easy to sell. But you should have seen the fight his Leader Dog put up!"

2. "Heck, that's nuthin'. I usually get 7 or 8 out of a flock like that!"

3. "And he shouted, 'Remember the Alamo', and threw out three Mexicans!"

Let's see, four punch lines? (Is there a joke there, somewhere)

ADDENDUMB (addenda) to HUMOR ARTICLE

Some "bell-ringers"

1. "The Quaker and the Cow", but only if one is GOOD with an Oklahoma accent
2. "The Desk Sergeant and the Waif"
3. The "forgotten" Punchline Series
   - A. Blind shopper
   - B. Drunken duck hunter
   - C. Plane in peril
4. Quadruple Puns
   - A. "Rudolph, the Red-nosed Reindeer"
   - B. "Barefoot Boy with Cheek of Tan"
5. "The Technical Bastard"

Do...Oh DO...remember that probably not one-half of your audience is going to catch the best of jokes!

Well, then, if I AM a humorist, how, modestly (a joke?) do I assess my own abili-

ties? I think that it is, first of all, a joke that I be called a humorist. Surely you must have a sense of order...a firm idea of what would be suitable in a given situation, a sense of organization...to be able to "hit 'em where they ain't". If you had ever seen my 'filing system', my neat workroom, or gone spelunking through the caverns of my mind...you'd see the joke of it all. Organized is what I'm not! I cannot recall how many times I have carefully laid something in a place **WHERE I COULD NOT FAIL TO FIND IT EASILY,** and then spent days or weeks in frustration, trying to remember where I had put it! Most fortunate men have a wife to help them in this regard, and to maintain their social calendars and remember anniversaries and birthdays (and supply other services which Dr. Kinsey did not clearly explain to me!). Me? No. I am a bachelor, by choice. (And, six different women of DeKalb County made that choice!) I blunder along, muttering and profaning as I go. I KNOW that it WILL come to light...but not until it's need has abated or I have skated along the edge of cerebral meltdown.

Is cussing funny? Perhaps not in good taste, possibly blasphemous; but sadly, it can be funny. If the purveyor is of such lofty or such innocent stature that a bit of Billingsgate is startlingly unexpected, then it would be funny. See: Halloween generic joke, "You bwoke every #&%&* &#%$* cookie in the bag!" (Note the humor of a 71 year-old, "no-holds-barred" humorist shying away from saying "God-damned" in his punch line!)...Alternate juvenile punch line, "Don't cry? Hell, I'll sue!"

Sadly...humor isn't what it used to be. Gone are the charming ethnic and religious jokes (and NO, they were not viciously prejudiced!) "Parky" Parkyacarcas of Fred Allen's Show...or Mr. Kitzel of Jack Benny's Show...or "Mama MIA, attsa' some spicy pizza!"...and here comes the Anti-Hellenic/Anti-Defamation League/Italian-American Society to point out the grievous error of your ways. But, I di-

gressed, did I not? If...IF...**IF**...I am a humorist, it is because I seem to have a well-developed sense of **WHAT OUGHT TO BE** in a given situation. And, the sneaky rebel in my soul causes me to often offer awful variations on the expected. I taught pretty well for three years (and "somehow" for thirty-one more), and I was in the business of delivering ***ORDER***, along with the bard and the birds and the bees, grammatically speaking. My parents were Victorians, and they KNEW how the world ought to be! My parentage and my profession inclined me to order; I knew when it was being violated perniciously. I came to know how to violate it for beneficial effect, for the laugh is truly healthy.

Odd that any of said ability should have come from my parents! Life was pretty serious for them, most of the time. Oh, indeed, Mother told of kicking the checkerboard from between Father's knees when she caught him cheating, early in their marriage...but genuine subjects of laughter...very few. Father told of jokes played on others (I suspect, on him, too) at the factory; but I cannot remember him finding anything very funny. (Oh, they DID unconsciously funny things at times (Father and the "Lava-Soaped Chicken"); they told of funny things happening to others ("The Chef Bakes a Torte"); but they were not stand-up comedians, no. Once...just once...she sent me a funny card in which was suggested that I could improve my bowling scores by cheating! Slim pickin's for humor, were they not? But, they were mine parents, and I would not trade them for the Rockyfellers'!

But...what about dirty jokes...scatological items...off-color jokes? **(***REVELATION***) I like 'em!**...but not used as a weapon to deliberately embarrass folk whom I know would be deliberately offended by them. I do not care for the cruel joke, whether it be racial, ethnic, intellectual (Black, "Pollock", moron), or sexual. I claim the fine

old Angol-Saxon trait of rooting for the down-trodden...not jumping on them with a nasty shot, thank you! Similarly, I'm adept enough with languages that I can accurately simulate a cleft palate, infantile preservation, stuttering, excessive sibilance, nasality. I will admit to having used them for humor, as have I used regional accents. **But, I am ashamed to have**

stooped to demean some group with them.

Does all of the foregoing make me sound impossibly moral...hypocritical? I suppose so; count it as the price of my acquaintance, and pay the price as you will, or no!

And...I'm not really that fond of "fat man" jokes anymore, either. (I once endured five or six of the foregoing by the featured speaker while seated on stage at a high school graduation. I'm sorry that I don't believe in Hell...**I'd like someplace to send that guy!**)

Now...does that mean that I can't take a joke on myself? Nah, Bunky...if they are really in good humor. But, I reserve a special place in that speculative Hell for two characters with whom I once bowled. They told deliberately insulting "fat man" jokes, and they meant them! But, there are some things that are funny, and true about me that I **CAN** endure. I have enjoyed, believed, and exemplified Montgaigne's observation that "...old men can remember everything except how often they have told you something!" I did sit down once, after a speech, and miss the chair...and it's funny to me...NOW, 55 years later! I can appreciate the ridiculous situations I have gotten myself into, at times. I can appreciate the humor of someone as spectacularly large (as I used to be)

doing or trying things customarily reserved to the svelte and agile. Couple that with a lust for exaggeration (I got it!), and you may have me doing the limbo under the Golden Gate Bridge.

But anymore biting fat-man jokes, and I'll treat you like a liberal in the court of King Canute Gingerich!

Well, hey! I didn't hear any defense of MY wounded sensibilities when that nerd told the five or six "fat-man" jokes at the St. Joe Commencement in 1952, and I survived. (But then, maybe, I heard so few "fat-man" jokes because, as the man said, "He stropped his tongue on both sides each morning!" [Have your Grandfather explain the reference to you.] I usually could get in the last words, and a few of them far enough over the insulter's head that it enhanced his honest inferiority complex.

Do I see any humor today that I can truly enjoy? Oh, sure, I like some of the political satire, particularly of Mark Russell; and to a lesser degree, Dennis Miller. I like Whoopee Goldberg...when she isn't trying to "out-smut" the boys. I like Roseanne, not because her character is in any way appealing, but because her house looks so much more honest than Donna Reed's used to...if they could just re-title it, "Father Knows Beast!". I vastly enjoy English comedy...the rollicking slapstick of "Are You Being Served?", and the forever recurring plot line of "Keeping Up Appearances [Hyacinth's Weekly Downfall]". And, of course, in closing (I'll bet you thought I'd never get to it, either!), Who, O Who, would not respond to the rollicking humor of Julia Child's adventures in wine cellar and kitchen and wine cellar and wine cellar? Long may her liver survive!

A game we used to play: When the English Literature Class had been particularly productive on Hamlet, then we'd play **"Re-Cast the Classic".** You tried to make the most improbable casting of the play you could, using current

entertainment or political personalities. To wit:

Hamlet---Don Knotts, John Candy, Danny DeVito!

Ophelia---Phyllis Diller, Rhea Perlman, Bette Midler

Madonna, Barbra Streisand, Demi Moore

Gertrude---Whoppie Goldberg, Demi Moore, Carole Channing

Claudius---Arnold Schwartzenegger, Sylvester Stallone, Elton John

Polonius---Andy Griffith, Buddy Ebsen, Ray Walston

Gravedigger---Madonna, Barbara Streisand, Prince

Try your hand at it. See if you can't do worse!

HUMOR ME -- PART TWO

My God - He's Endless!

There are some very real cautions that must be observed by the budding comic, lest some cultural horticulturist prune you right out of existence.

1. Know your audience. It is absolutely true that half of your listeners/readers will miss the point/humor of even your best-told/written jokes. Compounded by booze and noise, it's a wonder that anyone even grunts when you get to the laugh line. Keep it at least as simple as you think your audience wants it, or even more so. (And make it a Hell of a lot plainer than that last sentence!) Do not cast your clever double-entendres among the non-literate. (You cannot get off good literary jokes to someone whose idea of good lit is "Dick and Jane". You may know the most enchanting triple pun or two, you'll never get a chance, in an ordinary world, to tell them!) See: "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer"; "Barefoot Boy pun" [a quadruple pun!].

...Do not cast your clever double-entendres among the non-literate...

2. Know your audience, Part the second. Taste is everything. Only a total boor will deliberately offend the helpless and innocent to push a smutty story. (Once I knew a **BOOR** who delighted in ambushing lady

teachers with offensive jokes in the teachers' lounge. I suspect that his life was prolonged, as he had contracted a wasting illness, by the fact that neither the Lord nor the Devil cared to deal with him in the Hereafter!)

3. Know your audience, Part the Third. Are THEY ready for jokes? Most after-dinner audiences have the perceptively of a herd of cows. When your humor and the meatloaf and/or "Tuna Surprise" compete for their attention, the stomach will win every time. Keep it simple, friend. And, observe please...even when you think you've got 'em, half of them are laughing because they don't intend to be caught not laughing, EVEN THOUGH THEY DIDN'T "GET" THE JOKE AT ALL!

4. Avoid "topping" your listeners. Like ME, you may have a "keyed memory": you know scads of jokes, stretching back into the misty past, but they don't come to mind until SOMEONE ELSE first tells a joke; then you "top" them, to little thanks. Little...**but LITTLE love does this win for you!**

5. Avoid the cruel joke...or if you **MUST, just MUST** tell it, make yourself the butt of it, rather than someone helpless...like a minority of your listeners. Otherwise, your listener may quickly become an enthusiastic volunteer of a dwindling minority...your friends. But somewhere earlier, I expressed regret over the passing of the ethnic joke. Were they not cruel, insensitive, mindless? Not on your tintype, dearie! Not as they were told in my youth...not as they were meant. They more demonstrated the humor, the warmth, the humanity of the Pole, the Italian, the Jew...and heaven save me from the NAACP, the Negro/Black/Person-of-Color/ African-American. We **could** and **DID** enjoy the humor of Mammy in "Gone With the Wind". It was not with some evil sense of superiority that we saw the Negro house servant/butler pursue the last chicken for Ashley

Wilkes' dinner in falling Atlanta...the situation was just plain funny (to all, except the rooster). Maybe Butterfly McQueen WAS a characature (as was Stephen Fetchet, I guess), but only the Strom Thurmonds of this world

would contend she was typical of Negroes.

And, hey! Telling that joke on yourself...telling it well...may forestall someone else telling one about you. Clever!

6. Hey! Good taste is good taste! Some jokes will **NEVER** be appropriate, like medical jokes at the dinner table. I recall a respected physician commenting on the frequency of bowel-function conversations at the local senior citizens center, **while we were attending a pancake breakfast.** No, no! "Sophisticated", or anatomically correct jokes in the presence of children (who wouldn't understand, anyhow), or anyone easily offended by your superior knowledge of biology? No, no! And, yes...or rather **"No, no!",** to strongly partisan political "gems" in the presence of a neutral or opposite party.

And "black" humor? ("Other than that, Mrs. Lincoln, how did you like the play?)

And blatantly stolen/adapted humor-without-attribution? "Take my wife, please!"

And...und...it...y...&...? Is a big subject, yes?

Test: Item from morning paper, 12/27/95: "Tomatoes May Be good for Prostate". Have you seriously considered how difficult it would be to apply a ripe tomato to most

prostates?

1. In clinically correct terms, tell what is funny about the item.

2. Identify its suitable, unsuitable audiences.

3. Re-design the joke (if it be so) to make it applicable to a prolapsed uterus.

4. Tell the joke, in an acceptable way, to a variety of audiences.

5. Arrange bail, legal defense, relocation.

6. Go out of humor business.

AN OLD CODGER, REVISITED

Three years, now, my old friend, Silas Teddy "Ted" Walters has been gone ...but the memories of him hardly dim at all. While running through some interview notes about Ted recently, I found that there was much more about this remarkable man that could be told. To wit:

Ted was there for the "arrival" of cars in Auburn, and national life. "Your first car?"...a Dodge touring car, given to many flat tires (They all were then!) If you went more than 20 miles without having to change a tire, you considered yourself lucky. Many of the cars came with multiple mounts for spare tires...a mount on each fender, and sometimes two spares strapped to the backside! The first "Ted" car was a right-hand drive...as were many then, except the Ford.

Broken arms were a badge of ownership, due to hand-cranking and whipback of the crank. and, Ted told of having a viciously split thumb and forefinger, the result of such a whipback, throwing his hand into a sharp

. . .I found that there was much more about this remarkable man that could be told. . .

license plate. The offending vehicle there was a REO, named for R. E. Olds, the company owner. (What interesting names then!) Duryea ...Maxwell ...Kiblinger ...Apperson...Duesenberg...names of personal-

ity and romance! No "Belchfire 8's", few animal-attributes (but hey...the Stutz Bearcat?) very few "synthesized" names such as the Miata, the Corolla, or the Honshu hara-kiri!!!!

The recreations of the day? To the movies, at the Court, baseball in any non-frozen season, the Smart, the Empire...tickets

sold by Leah Little, 10 cents each..."silents", (Wm. Fornam, Gish sisters, Ramon Navarro, Theda Bara, the Barrymores) accompanied by piano, violin, and eventually, organ...or...***Band Concerts***on the Square, Thursday nights, two hours, a large band led by "Pres" Wilcox...on a rolling bandstand, **and for 30 to 40 years!** A genuine "silver coronet" band, yes!

....a Big shopping Night---SATURDAY...**Stores open 'till 10:00-11:00 PM,** really big crowds patronizing Hebel's Grocery, Nebelung's Shoe Store, Schaabs, McBride's, Hoff's Market, Clement & _____'s Grocery (but Ted couldn't remember EVERYTHING!)

...the popcorn stands

...Wible's, Penland's, Town's, and another "a bag of corn for a nickel", with "butter" and sometimes (for kids?) a generous scoop of redskin peanuts on it!

...and watering troughs at every town entrance, but particularly one at Main and Washington in North Auburn.

...and the first radio (Rol Muhn bought the town's first console radio, a Crosley, complete with earphones and the ability, under favorable conditions, to reach KDKA in Pittsburgh and WLS in Cincinnati...but

SCRATCHILY!

...and his first restaurant meal--Dan Hericks, at the Walton Travel Agency location

...and chewing tobacco IN SCHOOL!...but Beware! The teacher was as likely to give you a smart rap on the back, making you swallow the bollus (and usually making you deathly ill in the process) as he was to "whale the daylights out of you!" And, once "whaled", you concealed the fact from your parents, since most of them would have matched Charley Krise's discipline with the same treatment at home, rather than hiring a lawyer!

A BIRTHDAY HAPPENING

In a lovely, bygone age when tranquillity and gentility seemed to be the watchwords of society, there occurred in Hicksville one frantic afternoon that confounded its ambiance: Cousin Louise's Birthday Party.

Cousin Louise was the perfect young lady...at least as measured against her younger sister, Cousin Bea. Cousin Louise was 7 years older, which made being a lady a rather easier task for her than for poor Cousin Bea. Some parents have the disgusting habit of using older siblings as models for the younger, and doubtless exaggerating their perfection. Poor Cousin Bea had felt the sting of such odious comparisons, and probably felt it all the more for the fact that there was at least some small amount of truth to it. Father had been married twice, the second time at 44 to a 22 year old young lady. Cousin Bea was the third child of his second set and much the junior to the other two. She was a certain trial to her mother, who doubtless KNEW that the Lord had used much too much ginger in her compounding. Additionally, she had been allowed to play down at the poultry business (her father's source of the income that he so foolishly

. . .Some parents have the disgusting habit of using older siblings as models for the younger, and doubtless exaggerating their perfection. . .

gambled away at pasteboards), and the workmen enjoyed teasing her into juvenil displays of temper. Gingery, indeedy, Cousin Bea!

A lovely summer's day...the date of Perfect Louise's Birthday Party. The dining table was covered with pristine linen, and a beautiful birthday cake occupied its focal point. Chandelier overhead. All would be

perfection; and to assure that point, Cousin Bea had specifically and emphatically been disinvited.

Bea has seen the preparations. She was rather bright, and she felt the sting of omission keenly. She sat on the curb, there on High Street, seething in social purgatory. Flaming (if temporary) juvenile hatred permeated her nature.

And then, kind (for Bea), malevolent (for Louise and Mother), fate took a hand. Up High Street came the common conveyance of the day, a horse and buggy. Nature called, the horse responded and Bea recognized *O*P*P*O*R*T*U*N*I*T*Y. She darted into the street, cupped the "instrument of revenge" in her hands, and slipped into the dining room. She seated the "object" (a delight to a gardener at the correct moment, but not really intended for dining room tables) on the pristine white table cloth, next to the lovely cake.

How soon thereafter her mother discovered it, I cannot say. But, as the tale was told to me, Mother had no trouble identifying the author of such disgusting mischief. She was not a cruel woman by nature, but the

circumstances pushed her envelope of tolerance. She seized a fairground whip and prepared to show Poor Bea the error of her ways. Raised in the air for the first strike, the lash trailed through the chandelier, became ensnared, and brought it crashing onto the table, the "road apple", and the birthday cake. I think the sheer enormity of the events must have overwhelmed her, for it was never related to me that Bea suffered any lasting consequences of mere mischief.

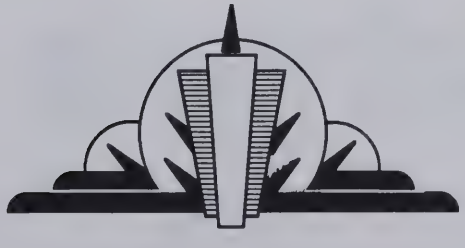
Cousin Bea grew onward to womanhood, helped to nurse Sister Louise when she died of cancer in the 30's, similarly nursed her father when he died in the early 50's, and nursed her mother when she passed away in the 60's. It should have earned her kind and loving care in her old age. Sadly, it didn't. She died alone in a second-rate nursing home. It ought to be said, however, that she retained the impassioned nature and the waspish temper into her old age, and truly, no hired help could deal with her for any extended period.

Those of us who had known her missed her.....still do.

What more?

Cousin Bea paints the pigs

Cousin Bea's spotless oven



L'INTERLUDE POETIQUE

To the Cat, Defecating in My Garden

"You there! With the spiky tail
With the provocatively arched spine;
I know what it is you do there, for
I have seen you p**p among my pansies...
I have seen you d******e in my delphiniums...
I know thee to have s**t in my Shasta daisies...
Well, do I know thee!
----------But-----wait----------
Why do we not declare a truce, for...
I would see thee given thy proper place...
Say...like among the strings of the Cleveland Symphony!
Yes!

(foregoing selection to be delivered 'molto furioso')

"Cute, Woodland Creatures"

It was 'Chuckie Woodchuck', indeed, until.....
The fur-bearing s*n-of-a-b***h
Ate off
Two whole Japanese balloon flowers
Two long rows of bush beans
A multitude of garlic plants
Belched.....
And looked around for some serious eating.
Well, trundling home to her burrow under Agnes Beuret's porch,
She was hit by a brick fragment, flung by the jerk next door
(His only good act in three years of neighboring).
She did not return, and was soon deservedly cyanide-d in her burrow.
The nasty neighbor moved away; and I?
I no longer think Punxatawney Phil is cute.
I hope they wake the hungry little S.O.B. 367 days a year!

*Sanitized for your Protection

A HOOSIER LOOKS AT HICKSVILLE

I cannot advise you to arrive in Hicksville, Ohio, either in early morning or at sunset. You'd find, should you do so, that the sun does not seem to rise in the proper east, nor does it set in the west...at least not for me, it doesn't!

(I have reached the conclusion that this geographic wonder is the result of confusion brought about by switches and turns in almost all roads leading into Hicksville, the more compounded by the diving of Ohio 18 under the railroad underpass on the "west" side of town (my most common approach angle).

I am easily bemused/confused/disoriented. I find that High Street doesn't run an honest north-south, and I see nothing "high" about it, other than the sunny spaciousness of the business district. Edgerton Street doesn't seem to have much to do with that "flower of Williams County"; and come to think of it, I have never been able to find the five or six corners...or whatever...of the Cemetery north (?) of town where many of my ancestors are interred.

. . .the sun does not seem to rise in the proper east, nor does it set in the west. . .

But, I kinda like the place, 'cause:

1. There's no waitin' for trains, as you'd find to your exasperation in Garrett, Auburn, or St. Joe. I cannot imagine such a boon of foresight as to elevate the train tracks,

especially in the 1870's when the B&O first penetrated these parts. The hours NOT spent waiting for trains since then would make a very appealing lifetime.

2. There's an in-town Fairground. I'm "taken" by the nostalgic charm of a permanent fairground, especially when I note the establishment and failure of at least two in my own

county. Additionally, it has a romantic personal charm to me, for it was there that my Mother ordered a rendezvous at the merry-go-round with her new beau...(she 16 at the time), that led within a year to their marriage...and within ten years, to total parental achievement (me!). And the sporting bonus: a grandstand and a track, graced of summers by harness racing. Now, I am sure that Hicksville doesn't see many Little Brown Jug or Hambletonian winners, but it's still a lovely bit of nostalgic '90's (1890's, that is) charm. I've seen such "wonders" as the Wyandott County Fairgrounds (I have the splinters from their grandstand to prove it!)...and even the local splendor of the Noble County Fairgrounds in Kendallville...but they just aren't Hicksville. No siree!

3. 'Cause those places in #2 above aren't spangled with MY relatives, places of business on both ends of High Street (albeit a few years ago), with a creamery tucked in the middle. Spangled with Hinschs, Teagartins, Osmuns, Humbargers, Stackhouses, and scads more ...Onstotts and Diesingers and Snyders. And, if any of those names ever appeared on police blotters, it was certainly a well-kept

family secret.

And, when earthly spell was cast off, they went to the quiet glade on the west side or the sunny calm of 6 Corners, except for a few (like Johnny Stackhouse, 1818-1891), who awaits eternity in the Farmer Cemetery.

All told, Hicksville isn't too bad a spot to await Eternity.

BUT, there are some mysteries too for the shallow-knowledged outsider.

1. Where does the water come from' where does it go to? I don't remember any rushing streams nearby...no great reservoirs. I know that once, about September of '72, they had a 7" rainfall in one evening, and THEN they had running water...reputedly going in one door and out the other of the Hicksville Elementary School! But, ordinarily, no rushing streams. But, where does the town send its waste water? "Town?" Yep...I only hear "exempted village" when they make school announcements.

2. Who initiated the "great exchange"...an Auburn girl to marry a future Hicksville Mayor, a Cherry of Butler traded for an Iva Scheuring; a Bill Jones traded for a Paul Thomas; and a good Manchester star, one Stan Pepple, cut in an outright deal? And, two journalistic luminaries...Auburn's latest gift to Hicksville literacy, while you sent us implement dealers, wedding arrangers, and dairy executives?

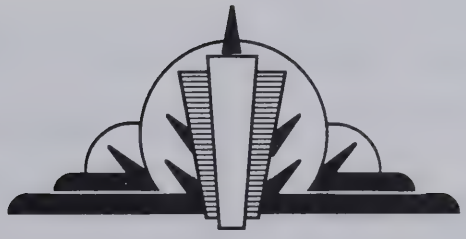
3. How did the "watering spot" on Ohio 18 become the obligatory "rite of passage" for so many Indiana youth, who chose to take alcoholic advantage of the differing ages of "consumption" in the two states...to the eventual prosperity of the tavern owner and morticians?

And in this discursive wonder, what may I have missed (that must be mentioned before I depart the paper?) Why, it's back to

High Street again, to remark how splendidly it blossoms out in the business district. (Hey-oo, we have whole towns here in DeKalb County that aren't as wide as High Street alone.) When I first saw that street more than 60 years ago, it seemed an immensely long walk to get from one side to the other...even with the charm of that confectionery on the corner of High and Main. Such coconut haystacks...such chocolate covered peanuts!

And, a farewell salute to High Street by remarking on the scrumptious spinach salad (sometimes available), and the devastating (as on a diet) pies. If you don't know where to find them YOU know less about Hicksville than I do!

So there!!!!



LAYERS AND LAYERS OF NONSENSE

As a callow youth (and boy, was I ever callow!), I rather fancied myself to have a rapier-like wit. Perhaps half-right, there? I could toss off the sharpest of mal-mots (Isn't that the opposite of a bon-mot?). It is rather likely that I was a prime example of the need for retroactive birth control; but on I went...offending any and all with my juvenile barbs. I would like to suggest that the ensuing 50+ years have mellowed my sense of humor/ humus (?)...but once in a while, a disquieting flashback.....

So it was recently when a dear friend sent me a clipping about the lady-artiste in Iowa who was going to execute (word **VERY** carefully chosen) a copy of Grant Wood's "American Gothic" in something like 500 pounds of creamery butter! I suppose the Iowa State Fair, or some other such artistic victim, was to be scene of this artistic tour-de-farce. Think of it! The horse-faced lady and her mournful husband, replete with inverted pitchfork and gothic window in the back-ground...and all in butter-by-Tiffany's (or have you priced butter lately?)

> ...The idea was, from the current world of celebrity/ notoriety, to pick the worst possible cast for the play...

Well, then, Gentle Readers, the teenager (never really far from control of my

mind) began "theme and variations" on the foregoing.

1. Cast your imagination on an "Elizabeth Taylor", done appropriately in cellulite!

2. Give your artistic livers up to a "W. C. Fields", done in frozen daiquiris!

3. I personally fancy a "Lawrence

Welk", done in over-ripe limburger cheese (How **does** one tell if limburger **is** over-ripe?)

4. Maybe...a "Don Rickles", in clotted bile?

5. A "Zsa Zsa Gabor", done in industrial strength Oil of Olay and iron filings?

6. Roll your own!

It's not as though I haven't gotten on such a "substitution bent" before. Once, in ages past (when I labored in the Vineyards of Education), I **even USED TO ENCOURAGE MY INNOCENT STUDENTS (!)** to play such a game. If and when we had a good study unit on one of the Shakespearean classics, we'd take a "day-off" after the big test and play at "Miscast the Classic". The idea was, from the current world of celebrity/notoriety, to pick the worst possible cast for the play. (Oh, I know that this is not very "big apples" nowadays...see Demi Moore in Scarlet Letter, surely more damaging to Hawthorne than any critic ever was!), and you KNOW that Hollywood and television do it all of the time! But, we slogged bravely ... ludicrously ... onward!

HAMLET: The Fair Ophelia...Phyllis Diller or Carol Channing? Pontificating, old Polonius: Don Knotts? Troubled Queen

Gertrude: Rosie O'Donnell? Loyal-Friend Horatio: Andy Griffith (Ah, I can hear it now, with slathery Southern accent, "Gooood Naaaaght, Sweet Prince. Flats uv ain-jells sing you-all to thaaay raist!" And Hamlet himself?.....your treat!

JULIUS CAESAR: Marc Anthony, for a funeral oration...just any politician, currently running for office! Caesar himself...either of the current major Presidential candidates, giving a telling reading of the "I am as fixed and unmoving as the north star!", line. If they can keep their faces straight on that line...and anyone believes them...then let them be elected! Faithful wives, Calpurnia and/or Portia...who but Madonna or Ivana Trump? Conniving Cassius...with "the lean and hungry look"...Richard Simmons? The Soothsayer ("Beware the Ides of March!")...any Sunday morning political pundit. And Loyal Brutus (last to stab Caesar)...any politician who has ever said, "I'm 100% behind him!"

Well, by now, you've sorta' got the idea. Try such mischievous play on advertising slogans...casts of TV shows...important government offices...or even at the next family reunion. Think what YOUR family could be if you could substitute, say---just any Rockerfeller, for a no-good uncle! It "do" just boggle the mind, unless you have a very high "boggle threshold"! ...Unlike I/me.

MY HOUSE BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD

A few years back, an honored, old gentleman of my acquaintance went to his eternal rest...not an uncommon event for someone of my acquaintance---or age! (I sometimes used to call my mother's attention to the age of her own children with the remark, "We're all old enough to die!" Mama's reaction was emphatic...sort of "None of that stuff for children of mine!"

Well, anyhow, I knew...I **know...that we are mortal,** and (an older sister proved it four years back.)...and anyhow, I was much flattered when the bereaved family asked me to be a part of the funeral service, and to read two of the departed gentleman's favorite poems...Bryant's "Thanatopsis" and "the House by the Side of the Road".

The latter selection comes often to mind to me, now, as I sit on my front porch, partaking of one of the few advantages of living on West Seventh Street. I take a good deal of pleasure from sitting on my formerly-overworked porch swing and watching the world pour by my door. Even considering the free, shortened-lifetime-by-carbon-monoxide-gas (a gift of the many passing motorists), it's still interesting. I have always claimed to be

. . .I knew...I know...that we are mortal. . .

bored by mathematics and statistics, yet I DO find it interesting to conduct personal surveys of passing traffic. "What proportion of 4-door, full-sized sedans, as compared to all other vehicles?" "How many Lincoln Town Cars in a given period of time?" "How many vehicles can clear a single change of the Indiana Avenue stoplight (10 to 15 in non-rush

times, up to 25 a change in rush hours [11 to 1 PM, noon rush; 3-6 PM, afternoon rush]. And, during ACD, "How many classics, and of what pedigree?" "Bring on your Jaguars...my dream car! I am prepared to sniff at Mercedes, upto and including the 500 series. I know what a Rolls or a Bentley is, but 'Ho hum', anyhow!" But a lovely old L-29 Cord...a boat-tailed speedster of any make...a gorgeous old, "Remington Steele" white Packard convertible!...or a finely, lovingly restored old Ford, preferable Model A or older! Well, my taste is eclectic...just let it be something besides the modern, "off-the-rack", "melted-ice-cream-styled" Detroit detritus.

What else besides the blur of passing traffic and the accents of distinctive motors? Friends, that's what! Now, for a very long time, I could not sit on my porch without receiving the profane salutes of former "Stackhouse dodgers", school-aged motorists who had been too cowardly to ever take my courses, but found a kind of "hit-and-run" bravery to shout selected obsenities from a moving vehicle! Gradually, their vulgarity wore itself out, and I lost track of most of them, although I do read the police blotter each Monday to see which of them have fur-

ther "distinguished" themselves!

No, the friends I refer to are the good people who seem to have delighted in my annual crop of elephant ear plants, and in my frequent presence in the beloved porch swing. They pass: they honk, they wave. Early on, after my retirement, I would not look up and acknowledge them...irked, you would guess, at the passing profaners, and unwilling to take a chance that it was they who "saluted" me. But, as time went on, I came to again pay attention to the honks and waves, and...even though I frequently cannot identify them immediately...I do enjoy them. "It's not rudeness if I don't acknowledge you". Put it down to failing reflexes, failing eyesight (not really!), and the tendency to get so focused on something that I cannot shift my attention quickly enough. If you like the elephant ears, so do I; and I'm pleased to grow them for your pleasure, also...and did you know that I have dozens of them to give away each spring?---**if you will simply call and pick them up. [I NEVER remember to whom I have promised them,** and I won't be put to book-keeping to keep a list of possible donees.]

Other "porch-watching trivia"...the sort of 'self-conscious' look of people who walk by with YOU looking at them from the porch...the varying degrees of civic responsibility of people "walking" their dogs [when Towser makes a 'deposit' on someone's lawn]...**the TRESPASSING buzz of people driving down MY DRIVEWAY,** [having ignored a "dead end" sign and a "do not enter, no exit" sign to get there]...

And then...then...then there's the seasonal, "Dandelion Delight". In Berke Breathed's late lamented comic strip, "Bloom County", there is the character, Opus, the Penguin, who delights in dandelions. Call me "Opus"! I think they're sprightly, and a wel-

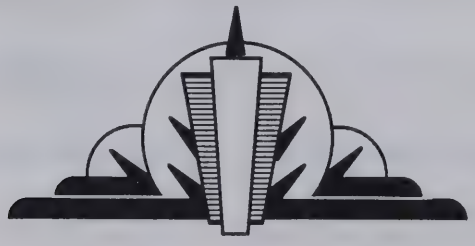
come sign of spring (to me, at least). My lawn, in proper season, is spangled in yellow! Ah, indeed, I know that to the right of me, across the street for three consecutive lawns, and to the left of me for three lawns ...dandelions are an anathema. But here, at 364, there is an oasis of non-conformity and glowing yellow. Not only are they, to mine eyes, beautiful; they are cover. A few years ago, my terminally industrious next -older-sister and her husband offered to apply weed killer for me in the spring. "Hey-oooooo....if it weren't for the "weeds", as you fancy them, there'd be nothing at all on that patch of ground!" "Just call it 'Hubert's low-tech, appealingly (appallingly?) natural lawn."

...and before you take the considerable risk of disparaging MY sense of beauty, recall that **I was the originator,** in my part of town, of: Jewels of Tibet, elephant ears, Japanese balloon flowers, California petunias, six different colors of rose of Sharons, moon flowers, and other vanity-producing species...not to mention three varieties of pampas grass!

My, but this is all a long way from the porch swing, suddenly!

Well, anyhow, the passing parade of life delights me...even with its tendency to dump ash trays on my lawn and to play their car stereos like a cannonade. I shall, like departed friend Lehr Wilder, "sit in my house by the side of the road, and be a friend of man[kind]"...at least most of them!

Honk, wave as you pass by, or stop on the porch for a chat!



MAMA'S ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

Everyone's mother is...or sadly...was remarkable, including mine! This is not to say, however, that they must all have been stamped out of the same mold. Everyone's mother is/was remarkable, but with charming variations.

My mama, for instance. Please observe, I could never directly address her as "Mother", of "Ma" or "Maw". Not for her the erudite and pretentious "Mater". Sometimes slangily, I could call her "Toots", or "Sweetie", and she endured it. But, after her death in 1987, I came more and more to remember her as "Mama".

What attributes did she share with all other mothers? I should think the love of children was a universal trait, and I am sure WE put as much strain on that trait as most children would and do, from dreadful time to dreadful time. She, however, could spend less time with her children than most mothers of the 1930's...she was one of the early "working mothers". A funny term when you consider the amount of work all mothers were expected to do just within the home! Mama was, you may know, a superb cook. For nearly 25 years, she cooked professionally, culminating

. . .I should think the love of children was a universal trait. . .

with owning her own restaurant. Interestingly, within that single, city block, there were two of these remarkable women...good cooks, restaurant proprietors, mothers. And...and...even though the mothers were much away from home, their children's' names did not appear on the police blotters or probation records!

When mother could be at home, she did vary from type. She was not a happy housekeeper. Adequate, but not enthusiastic. I have always attributed this to her being forced to domestic work when we first came to town in November, 1924. With four children and debts of their bankruptcy to clear up (One took fully 13 years, but it was paid!), she felt forced to do cleaning and cooking for others. When it became possible for her to pay anyone else...became necessary to hire someone else because of her restaurant work schedule...she did employ domestics. I can recall at least two ladies who did laundry for us, both within our house. I recall one comfortable old, grandmotherly type, with a touch of timid larceny about her. They would be a rich subject in themselves.

There were other...many other...interesting traits that mother had, not the least of which was her religious intolerance. She had been a member of St. Joe's **prominent** church as a girl, but a distressing combination of circumstances soured her on that faith...she heard her father preached to Hell in his funeral sermon, and what she felt to be his intended inheritance ended up in a foster brother's hands and went to pay for the stained glass window in the west wall of the sanctuary. Scratch one church!

She tried another church in the early days in Auburn, that of one of her sisters. I don't really know why it didn't jell for her, but by 1931, she had become a member of a fundamentalist, strongly evangelical faith...one that has come knocking on your door at some

time or another. She was baptized in 1931, and it remained the faith of her choice for the next 56 years, nearly.

That faith was, as are many newly-minted faiths, endowed of the idea that they alone were God's chosen people, and the ONLY avenue to salvation. They particularly disdained the Roman Catholic and Lutheran faiths; and particularly excoriated the former for its rigid hierarchical structure, as they saw

it. It was always a subject of amusement to me that they adhered to just as strict a heriarchial arrangement in their faith as they criticized among Catholics.

Well, as the year advanced, the promised Armageddon either did not appear, or, was for one reason or another delayed. Mama's intolerance was, for selected individuals, relaxed. Her Catholic daughter-in-law became a trusted business agent for her...unbelievably 30 years before! Several Catholic friends of mine were even granted Mama's conditional approval for salvation.

Me and Mama's faith? We had our battles early on, as she tried to coerce me to attend supposedly voluntary church services. She had explained "free will" in a moment of weakness, and I bought into it vigorously. It struck me as hypocritical to tell the child that he had free will and then to rule that he were free only to stay in his bedroom if he did not wish to attend the Bible study class in the living room! For such, or what ever reasons, none of her children REALLY accepted her faith, although an older sister did become a member of her congregation, because of marriage to a member.

I suppose that this may all be of moderate interest, but what of that title? Well, it came about thisaway'. To Mama, the high point of the religious year was **NOT** Christmas. Her faith was rather Puritanical in some aspects, and like the original Puritans, did NOT celebrate anyone's birthday, including Our Lord Christ's. (Among the Puritans of Massachusetts, you would have been sternly admonished or punished for doing so!) Mama's faith identified itself with some of the aspects of faith, including the celebration of the Last Supper, which they chose to call the Memorial. In late winter, there came to be a sense of anticipation...particularly among the elderly. For, you see, not all members of the congregation could partake of the communion, as it were. Only the oldest members, those known as the Remnant, actually participated. Mama was of the Remnant, a fact of almost-quiet pride to her. There would be a flutter of preparation...the best of clothes consistent with their disdain for earthly materialism that is...the proper "altar" cloth, the proper wine vessel and glasses...and attendance, even in the shadow of death!

As Mama had grown older and less mobile, she came to have contact with ordinary functions of the faith only through her Tuesday evening Bible study classes in our living room, **but...BUT, for Memorial, she made a monumental effort to attend. Now...NOW, THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT COMES IN!**

For it came to pass, in those last years of her life, the funeral home next door changed hands, and it came to be managed for its new owners by a fine lad, albeit a **Catholic!** He and Mama hit it off just fine, and when he was informed of the looming Memorial...and noting Mama's lack of mobility, he offered a wheelchair and the massive gray funeral limousine, with all the help it should take to get her in and out. Mama was practical, she was. She was also flattered, she was. It did not take much consideration for her to accept. (Mama

"cottoned-up" to big cars, anyhow!)

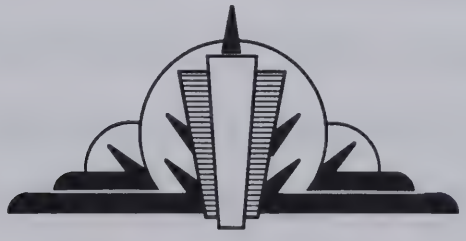
Well, came the Thursday night of Memorial that March, and the limousine drew up in the driveway. Into the house came dear good friend, Doc Trausch...a bonafide Catholic; Craig Taylor of McComb-Dilgard-Cline, another bonafide Catholic...**and two more sturdy helping hands...ALL CATHOLICS!** Didn't faze Mama one bit, no sirree! Off she went, like Queen Victoria, to her Diamond Jubilee.

The Limousine drew up in the rear parking lot of the Kingdom Hall, I helped Mama into the wheelchair again, and the four **Black Papists** (as I enjoyed calling them), swept mama into the hall. Now...you wouldn't have dared to raise an eyebrow in Mama's presence about such an arrangement, but I'm just sure that this bevy of Ancient Enemy were recognized. Mama was personally delighted.

Memorial went off swimmingly, with Mama, but without me or the four Catholics. At 9:30, my 85-year-old Cinderella's carriage was at the back door again, and she came joyously home from her evening of dreams.

The occasion was repeated just so, one more time. And then, in 1987, Mr. Taylor carried out Mama's final instructions, this time for her funeral. He did so with grace and commitment; he would have anyhow, but Mama had told him that if he didn't, she would return to haunt him! I think he's pretty safe.

And, I am sure that she has made several more exceptions to her Salvation List, as a result of this beautiful, Ecumenical gesture.



HOW DO I LOVE/LOATHE THEE

from "Sonnets to the Long-eared"
by Elizabeth Basset Browning

I love those long ears, that may be wrapped entirely about thy head...even clipped together with a clothes pin (should one so unkindly choose).

I love(d) the sight of thee, coming home in a shoe box. Little did I wot that in another few months, you would be eating shoe boxes.

I loved thee in pursuit of Fred, the Cat (who really had little to fear of thee, agile and massive as he was.) Thou pursuest him up and onto the dining room table...hence to the floor in an awkward leap that permanently sprained and mis-shaped thy front paws...and **thou learned naught from thy experience!**

I loved thy very excesses, for thou art the **Spirit of Excess.** Eatst thou? My God! Eatest everything in sight, given the chance (and now, with Lily, the Lover-cat, as thy suspected confederate, thou eatest things not remotely in sight.)

. . .I love(d) the sight of thee, coming home in a shoe box. Little did I wot that in another few months, you would be eating shoe boxes. . .

And before there was a Lily, there was the coffee cake, "safely stored on cabinet top". Thou gottest to it, anyhow. Thou atest the coffee cake **and ingested the carton** in which

it was packed. It cost $60 to have the veterinarian "un-plug/irrigate/enemize" thee back to full function again!

And thou learned naught! Ill-advisedly, we left a full plate (8-10) bratwurst on top of the kitchen table and turned our backs on thee. When thou appeared on the front porch soon thereafter, it was in misery. Thou laidst on thy side for two or three hours, and **every bratwurst was EASILY DISCERNIBLE** on thy distended flank. Dear, dumb doggie!

Love thee as we do, we are appalled by thy doggie-dish manners. 'Tis said to be the result of being severed from home and tit too young, but you become a total canine savage when eating. Poor Bill, the Rascal-cat, will forever have a squint (lucky him, to even have a life left!) for having "encroached" on thy feeding zone as a kitten. Another expensive visit to a veterinarian, to have Bill pieced together...and he only a rash kitten at the time! (He has now grown to a vast cat!)

We caution guests about succumbing to thy importuning looks and manner when they are at the dinner table. They are WELL-ADVISED to count their fingers carefully if they give in to the folly of feeding thee out of hand.

And, thou occasionally smell like a dog, despite the fact that we "gave" thou an "alteration". Thou acteth like a total baby whenever we take thee to the veterinarian...so much so that WE should have been paid by the vet for the entertainment value of thy craven performances. Redundant. Keening, whining, moaning, cravenly groaning...blubbering and howling, snuffling and shuffling...thou makest the world to wonder what we could be doing to a dumb animal to produce such profound

suffering. (It's not that they have actually done a thing to thee...thou begin thy litany of woe the very instant thou sensest thy destination. Yet, when you art "sent to camp" at the vet's boarding kennels, thou seemest as happy as a clam, if not as bright. Hast thee no saving virtues, (or why should this have been penned at all)?

Well...thou art a punctual, dedicated defecater. Thy mistress hast only to take thee to the right spot on the greensward, give a command, and instant evacuation will occur...a tremendously efficient process it would seem to those who have had to range the whole of West Auburn...or wherever...looking for just that "right" spot...**and earning the honest ire of the landowners and LAWN-MOWERS thereafter!**

A final, redundant comment (to any real dog-owner): **Thou art uncritical, continuing love!** At every return, whether from a week in the field or a trip to the basement...and whether owners or Mother or Friends, thou art there to gaze adoringly at them, imploring the pat on the head, the thump on the side, or the ecstatic scratching of any and every part of thy physiognomy ...and to throw in a complimentary "slime-ing!" for any who will indulge thee.

I, who "pen" these words, will find it a dull world when thou goest, as thou inevitable must, to that Great Exercise Yard in the Sky. I have not been able to own a dog since 1939 (I live on Suicide Alley for any active dog), but I have known, enjoyed...maybe even loved...the Princesses, Sugars, and Bradley's of others. As such, I do believe the title, "All Dogs Go to Heaven". (I have my doubts that all humans do, or SHOULD have the same Destination ....but Dogs .....**Amen!**)

DOGGIE ADDENDUM:

I've a sibling (at these prices, you get

more than just a "sister") who is NOT a noted doggie lover. (She can leave them alone, or leave them alone!) (intended redundancy) Even she has sterling memories of Bradley, the Basset. He had crossed paths with Friend Ernestine's Russian blue cat, Abigail, **(who brooked no "sass" from any lump of a Basset hound!)** The Old Gray Girl had him backed into a corner, literally, with both ears and nose bleeding from her "five-bladed doggie-slicers". Abigail's fighting weight---about 8 pounds. Bradley's craven, cowering poundage---about 70. **NO MATCH!**) [Said Abigail had once parachuted onto Bradley's back and begun an enthusiastic excavation with her claws to deter his attack on the loving, trusting Sugar, another pet of the household.] **She had his number!**

We close (again?) with the observation that Bradley's passing will bring abundant trauma to at least four humans who knew, and critically, loved him, anyhow!

"Waiting in the Wings"

Lily, the house cat and Bumptious Bill (as mentioned above)

Farewell, My Old Gray Menace (already in print) book #1

Princess, Kizzy, George I, and II - the E. G. Parish pet squad

Funeral Tribute to Sugar

THE WHISTLING WIRES

Visits to the town's dry goods stores weren't exactly a staple of childhood imagination in the '30's...in at least not mine. Such stores...Penny's, Schaab's, McBride's, all important fixtures in local retailing...were places your mothers went, and your sisters worked, but not of even marginal interest to a raw-natured youth such as myself. Oh, indeed, you just **had** to make a trip there for your new shoes once or twice a year, unless you were the Nebelung type (whatever that might have been). And, during the dreaded "back-to-school" period in late summer, you might be drug there. But, hey, it wasn't half the interest of Mike Lumm's grocery or the Thompkins Ice Cream Parlor or Staman's Drug Store, **except for the whistling wires in the old Penny's store!**

Early footnote: Even a grocery wasn't of interest, unless you could cadge a sample paring of cheese, or a complimentary jaw-breaker. The ice cream parlor...self explanatory, as was Staman's soda fountain. End of footnote.

. . .and it had a variation on the classic "God-and-the-machine" ideas of the Greeks. . .

But, Penny's had a unique system of handling money, and it had a variation on the

classic "God-and-the-machine" ideas of the Greeks. No showgirl had to make change in Penny's. A mysterious being, located on the mezzanine floor back and above you, exercised that responsibility. Your shop girl noted your purchases on a sales slip, and taking that and the paper money proffered, attached both of them to a small clip/cup/trolley (Well, it IS

hard to describe!). You see, she detached the bottom half of the "trolley cup" with a half-twist, clipped the sales slip and the paper money in a sort of alligator clamp on the bottom, and then re-attached it to the "trolley" top. Once in place, she then took hold of a wooden hand grip, hanging from the end of the propulsive system. A firm pull/tug/jerk furnished the motive power to propel the cup-trolley up gently sloping wires to the cashier's cage on the aforementioned mezzanine. (Egad! All those words just to tell you that it **"whistled"** as it sped up the wires [and when it came back down again]!)

Weeeel l l l l,.....anyhow, the cashier did ALL the figuring about change, probably also inspected the simple addition on the sales slip, made the change, enclosed any coins inside the cup...and maybe the folded paper money, also...attached the sales receipt to the alligator clip, and returned all to the appropriate station via the wire trolley...whistling. Ah, not a shrill newsboy's whistle; but rather , a sleeting whistle.../a hissing sound, if you will.

It all took not very long...not more than two or three minutes unless it was during the Friday night or Saturday night rush period. You, the customer, made polite chit-chat with

the salesgirl, or inspected nearby merchandise or your manicure or whatever else. It's rather unlikely that you did further impulse shopping, as you would be enticed to do in most modern stores. First, the range of merchandise was vastly less then, than now; and also economic conditions did not provide as much discretionary spending power (You knew what you needed, and you rather more likely stuck to a careful shopping regimen then.)

Your purchases were discretely wrapped already, and likely with no store logo to proclaim you the "smart shopper" (or unwitting advertiser) of a particular establishment...brown paper and a serviceable binding from a cone that must have held miles of cheap string. (And when you got it home, you smoothed out the paper for further use, and you wound the string in a household ball, and weren't thought eccentric for doing so, either!)

How else do I remember that Penny's Store? Shoe department in the back, I think; dry goods and sewing supplies on the mezzanine; much more open space than today's stores; NO air-conditioning, and no complaints about it, either; not exactly overpaid if you were a shop girl (My sister "moonlighted" there, in addition to working at Newberry's and the Auburn Rubber Company at times.)

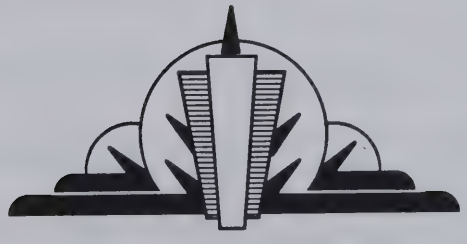
Wooden floors? I think so. Very large display windows, with very discrete mannequins, when used at all. A wedge shaped entrance that did...and still does...protect you from some inclement weather.

A prevailing odor? Perhaps the subtle, "perfum-y" odor from the counters of "bolted" cloth...not an unpleasant smell at all.

The lighting? Incandescent...not the harsh glare of fluorescence for Penny's, or Schaabs, or McBrides. If there was a quality to that light, it was warm, yellow-ish, and weak, by present standards. But, in that

day-and-age **and in that store, you didn't have to worry about seeing the quality of what you bought,** for it wasn't quality that eventually brought that venerable institution to an end in downtown Auburn!

"Sic transit", the Nebraska boy's dream, at least in Auburn.



VARIATIONS ON A MEDICAL THEME

"'T is an ill wind that blows no good"...or so the saying goes. How true! How true! Even the most nauseous ailment is good for a few licks at the local bridge tables, or in Cricket's Bar. Thus it was that I found myself recently; to wit:

I had fallen victim to some mid-summer virus, whose principal effect was a growing sore throat...roughly similar to a 6 or 8 consecutive summers of tonsillitis that plagued my childhood. I hied myself to my doctor, who prescribed a round of penicillin **and gargling.** Of the latter, I slowly made the discovery that I didn't have much...or enough...practice at this practice and wasn't very practiced at it at all, practically speaking. The throat got sore-er and sore-er (and pretty sorr-y) before I finally caught on that you must gargle for an extended period of time if it is to do you any real good.

And then there was the interesting matter of WHAT you use to gargle. "Try apple juice," said my doctor. "It tastes better."

"Well, now," saith I. "I don't have any apple juice, and I don't mind salt water." Salt water it was. Salt water, badly done, that is!

. . . **you CANNOT assume** that everyone knows how to gargle. . .

For, you see, I had rarely resorted to gargling before, and **you CANNOT assume** that everyone knows how to gargle, as it were, like a songbird at the bath! Too much in your mouth at once, and you dribble in a most unattractive fashion, much akin to a toddler having a first experience trying to swallow baby "glop", or wallpaper paste, or whatever it is we inflict on

our wee-est and dear-est!

And...**and...AND...** "How long do you gurgle at a gargle?" No one told me that length was any priority, and it took me three days to discover that the longer I gargled, the less sore my throat was afterward. So, my misery began on a Wednesday, and it was Saturday before I could do ANY effective swallowing. Spit a lot, I did! Didn't swallow at all, if I could help it. Weight dropped from 222.5 (doctor's scales) to 207.5 (my scales, BBB). But then, I got the hang of it all.

And, ! ! !E*U*R*E*K*A*! ! ! ***DISCOVERY***

You can...I say...you can turn your voice box on during gargling and launch yourself into some of the strangest melodic adventures you'd ever (never?) want to hear! A whole new field of musical interpretation has been "cracked" (last word VERY carefully chosen in previous statement)!

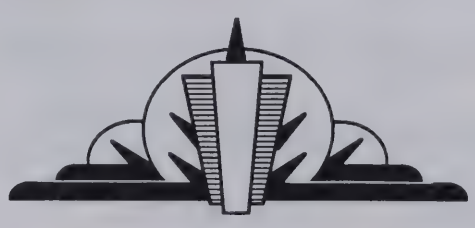
For...not only can you medicate yourself, as it were, but you can also entertain the troops (whatever), and entertain yourself at the same time. Nice day? Then do "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" from Oklahoma. Or, given the classical bent, do "Un bel Dia" from Butterfly. Going to lead the opening and

closing songs at the next Lions' meeting? "America, the Beautiful" and "Back Home Again in Indiana" will take on a character never heard before, once gargled. The sky's the limit; be of unfettered imagination here and break new ground!

And then, further fascinating variations: Why restrict yourself to salt water or apple juice? Would not Oenophiles want to gargle with a glass of Dom Perignon? Should we not soon see the frogs on TV doing a hearty "Bud-weis-gurgggggggle"? This approach has very obvious advantages! No unsightly spitting, and little need to time the length of gargle! When you fall down and pass out, you've had enough. True, you may get some strange stares when you confess that your cirrhosis of the liver began with gargling for a sore throat...that your DT's are the direct result of innovative medical treatment...that you've served time for GUI (!), but hasn't progress always had a price, anyhow?

And, it gets totally out of control, you can always join GA.

Al fin...I sorta' hated to get well. I regained much of the lost weight, I lost the extra salt (which is "shorted" in my current diet), and I enjoyed the possibility that a hyper-inquisitive neighbor was dealing with the mystery of why I was standing at the kitchen sink, chin thrust high in the air, while from somewhere came the strangled melodic imitations of opera. (For, you see, my last selection was "The Mad Scene" from Lucia de Lammermoor [and worse! I was doing the orchestral portion, rather than the soprano aria!])



PHILOSOPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS WHILE PUNISHING A WAYWARD LAWN

I had just been giving "what-ho" to my undisciplined grasses and weeds that had grown out over the West 7th Street curb (A thing of beauty, no less, in itself!), when age and common sense forced me to take a breather. Sitting on the front porch (and nursing an incipient blister on my thumb, I chanced to notice a lovely flicker of white coming across the lawn. No, not a wind-borne cigarette, but God knows there are aplenty of those to be found here in the "West 7th Street Drop Zone for Motoring Slobs"!

No, it was a passing cabbage butterfly, out prospecting for sex and cabbage plants, I should guess. Philosophy, ho! I sat wondering, as the butterfly was joined by another procreation-maddened flicker of white, about the mixed blessings of nature. They looked so sparkling...almost as though they were ricocheting off unseen currents of air...as they conducted their mid-air courtship. Not a thing negative about them...until you consider

. . .I sat wondering...about the mixed blessings of nature. . .

that their mating would be followed by a search for cabbage-family plants on which to lay the eggs. And then, the conflict. Oh, please understand...Nature must have had some purpose to creating the cabbage looper,

and in a general sense, I'm willing to cooperate. But, **NIMCP (Not in ***MY*** Cabbage patch, Bunkie!)**

And if you think my attitude a bit

starchy on the subject of cabbages, WAIT, O, WAIT UNTIL WE GET TO **MY ***TOMATOES*** AND THE TOMATO HORNWORM!** I'll risk the Wrath of Providence...and I don't mean Senator Claiborne Pell, either!...to offer the opinion that there is no earthly value to a tomato worm! I have seen, once and now forgotten, the moth that lays the egg that becomes the ravager of tomato plants. It wasn't any great beauty, and...even had it been...it would not have justified its wayward children eating my Better Boys and Wisconsin Experiment Station Hybrids (Yes, there was/is (?) such a tomato...the gift to me by a lovely old Mrs. Seltenright of Butler).

And so, as I view the questionable beauties of Creation, be they cabbage butterflies, "tomato" moths, or even the milkweed-eating progeny of the magnificent Monarch...be as free as the breezes that blow, but **BE GONE** from my garden!

I'LL BET YOU DON'T REMEMBER ME!

One of the lovely perils of teaching...and retiring thereafter...is to be witnessed again this Saturday night at the Auburn Lions tent: the return of the student to the old teacher! I will be sitting low behind the counter, counting the incoming cash (a labor of love for me, you may be sure!) and my attention will be called to a stranger, standing at the counter.

"I'll bet you don't remember me!"

Well, having just been concentrating on portraits of Lincoln, Hamilton, Jackson, Grant, and hopefully a Franklin once in a while...it may take me a moment or two to register on the present face. But, I should; for they are faces from my past of teaching. And I can "make" their evening if I do remember them.

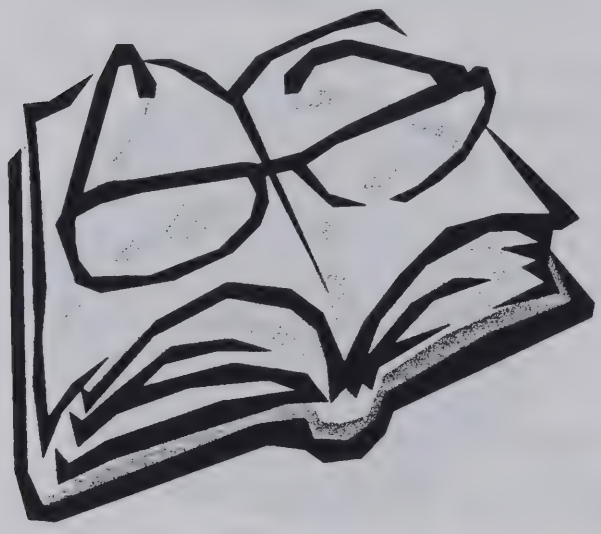
And what makes the student that I can remember? I rarely forget a 6' tall, red-headed, freckled girl...or any other exceptional physical type. I rarely forget dazzling scholars...the kind that made you so nervous because you fully knew that they were smarter than you, and would in later life considerably outshine you. Disciplinary problems? Well, yes, you would remember them, but they rarely look you up in later life, anyhow...so, no problem.

The ones that give me the greatest joy, however, are the everyday, not-so-run-of-the-mill good citizens who settled here in the county, sent me their good children, served their families, churches, and civic groups well...and then, paradoxically, when I would like them to call me by my given name, they still refer to me as **MR. STACKHOUSE** despite my happiness to now consider them a friend. (I've never been fond of my given name, and I rarely encourage anyone younger than I to use it. But, these fine folks, to whom I would gladly give the right, will be calling me MISTER even at my funeral, I suspect.

...and then, paradoxically, when I would like them to call me by my given name, they still refer to me as **MR. STACKHOUSE** despite my happiness to now consider them a friend...

Have I failed to mention the weak student,

and the student rebel? Well, now, 40 years after some of them demonstrated a very limited interest in English grammar, I must honestly observe that they have done quite will with their lives, grammar not withstanding. And the rebels? I can still remember that they were rebelling, and what they were rebelling



about...but it seems rather pointless now, and not worth the trouble we made of it. I don't really know whether that demonstrates growth on my part, a more mature judgement, or just senile boredom.

But, the most delightful moment of each last-night-of-the-Fair evening is when, paradoxically, I do remember someone whom 40 ensuing years has not removed from my memory. Let me tell you, "It more than makes their evening!"

And those that I cannot remember? I beg off, citing senility, or the changes that 20-30-40 years must have made in them. I can still light up their evening with a joke, sorta'. "Gee, that must have been Scott/Concord/Concord-Spencer/Leo/Riverdale/Garrett/Waterloo/Garrett/ Eastside/Dekalb...and you must be almost 30 years old by now!" This last remark is a PATENT FRAUD, and they know it, and they know that I know it, but they enjoy it anyhow.

So, should you come by this Saturday...or any future time and say to me, "I'll bet you don't remember me!" I may have to fake it, but I'll try to remember you...or at least make it a warm moment for you.

Eckhart Public Library

603 S. Jackson Street Auburn, IN 46706
Phone: 219-925-2414

Patron is responsible for all
material borrowed.

HECKMAN
BINDERY, INC.
Bound-To-Please®
MAY 03
N. MANCHESTER, INDIANA 46962

ECKHART PUBLIC LIB.
8401 9100 125 079 5